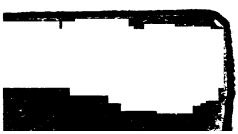

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[by Thomas Haynes Bayly]

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KATE LESLIE.

BY

THOMAS HAYNES BAYLY.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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KATE LESLIE.

CHAPTER I.

Just like childhood's sunny mirth
  When it looks on nature first,
Thy gay fountain gushes forth
  From the grot where it was nurst;
And as like to man's career
  Thy maturity is made;
Now a smile, and now a tear,
  Now in sunshine, now in shade.
Rapid river! rapid river!
  I could moralise for ever,
Yes for ever, and for ever,
  I could moralise on thee!

"I WILL go to my mamma's room," cried little George Hanson, struggling with the maid who endeavoured to detain him, and kicking with all his might at the closed door of his nursery: "I will go, Biggin; if you don't let me go, I'll break myself to bits."

So said, or rather shrieked, the only child of the widowed Lady William Hanson; but, instead of evincing any inclination to do violence to his own person, the whole energies of his little mind and body seemed concentrated in a passionate endeavour to intimidate, maim, or destroy his gentle and long-suffering attendant, Mrs. Biggin.

Mrs. Biggin indeed seemed gentle, but her gentleness was the result of her mistress's mandate: "Biggin," said her ladyship, "never thwart my boy in any thing; premature severity spoils the temper, and breaks the spirit." The servant therefore defended her shins from kicks, and her arms from pinches, as best she could; and Master George, knowing by experience that sooner or later his dear mamma, alarmed at his vehemence, would send for him and soothe him, screamed and kicked more lustily than ever.

In a lower apartment of the same mansion sat Lady William Hanson, before a mirror which stood upon an ample toilet-table, stored with essences and cosmetics. The lady's face was buried in a cambric pocket-handkerchief; and behind her stood Mistress Fane, her own maid, who spoke in a bland and soothing tone of voice while she removed from the table that extremely unbecoming article of dress, a widow's cap.

"Don't take on so, my lady," said the hand-maid; "sure, there's a time for all things; and, seeing that you 've worn these here caps for twelve long calendar months, this being the day——"

"I know it, don't speak to me," cried Lady William; "it's the melancholy anniversary!"

"I'm sure, my lady," said the abigail, "I'd not presume to intrude for the world; but what can't be cured, you know——"

"True, Fane, true—you are right; but——" and the lady paused and shook her head.

"I know by experience what you suffers, my lady; not that I'd presume to draw caparisons between my poor dear dead John and—and——"

An impatient gesture of the widow interrupted the attendant; but, adroitly skipping the name of her deceased master, she immediately continued:

"But it was better, my lady, that John should die, than live to be a cumbrance with age and 'firmities: you are still young, my lady, and I'm sure you look no age at all like; and though I'd be the last person to 'sinuate that you'd form *at present* any second—hem!"

Another gesture here cut short her sentence; but again she skipped the offensive expression, and again addressed her lady.

"It would be a sin to bury your persingal advantages any longer."

"I believe you are right, Fane," replied Lady William, glancing complacently at her mirror, which reflected a countenance comely enough considering that its fair proprietor had numbered forty years. "Yes, you are right; and I ought not to give way to regrets which are unavailing."

"Then I may remove the cap?" inquired Fane; and, not waiting for a reply, she placed artificial flowers before her mistress, and threw the *weeds* aside.

"I cannot wear these to-day, Fane," said Lady William. "They are old and tumbled; to-morrow, if I *must* again wear colours, you may summon my milliner and dress-maker. But, hark! what can be the matter; don't you hear that noise?"

"Oh yes, my lady," said Fane, "it is only Master George a-skirmishing to come and kiss his mamma; but now you're a-going to enter society again, it won't do for the child never to be happy without your ladyship."

"Very true, Fane, if I *must* go out; (and I suppose my spirits will require change of scene;) Georgy can't be *always* with me, as he has been during my year of mourning."

"He's been your plaything like, my lady; but, oh the powers, listen to that!"

And the whole house resounded with the screams of the child, who, accompanied by Mrs. Biggin, approached the apartment of Lady William. The door flew open, and in rushed the infuriated little urchin, who ran to take refuge with his mamma; while Biggin meekly followed, and, dropping a courtesy, said, "I comes to make a complaint, if you please, my lady; for Master George is so headstrong there's no guiding him."

Master George Hanson was, at the period at which our tale commences, eight years of age. His lady-mother had been the only daughter of an apothecary, who, in the neighbouring town of Danesford, had realised a competency, having been for many years before his death an alderman, and once a mayor. Danesford was a watering-place; and Alderman Gubbins and his lady, when their daughter Fanny grew up, left the old house with the dispensary attached, and took a residence in a more fashionable street. Fanny Gubbins was a handsome girl, and she had acquired a smattering of accomplishments quite sufficient to put her on a par with most of the Danesford belles. Mr. and Mrs. Gubbins never could contrive to enrol themselves among the best resident society of Danesford: many a struggle was made, expenses far from prudent were entered into, but in vain; for in the town where he had practised, his performances had made a lasting

impression on his patients,—he was considered *physically* objectionable, and *apothecary's weight* kept him down far below the grade of society at which he aimed. There is nothing so aristocratic as the "*best set*" of residents in a watering-place; and Mrs. A. B. C. or D., though unknown beyond the precincts of the provincial town in which they take the lead, are *in* that town as consequential and exclusive as if admission to their *soirees* could alone render an individual presentable and unexceptionable in society.

Fanny Gubbins was, therefore, rarely visible, except at the public balls and the theatre of Danesford; and several seasons passed away without, as old Gubbins expressed it, "any good having come of their finery." Fanny was twenty-nine, when, to the infinite delight of herself and her mother, at a very crowded public assembly, the master of the ceremonies walked up to them, presenting a very ordinary-looking middle-aged man, and, at the very moment when they were beginning to express by their looks their disapprobation of the proffered partner, introduced him as Lord William Hanson. It is unnecessary to dwell upon the exultation of mother and daughter: innumerable were the "your lordships" uttered by the former; and the handsome Fanny exerted all her powers of pleasing, and at length succeeded in winning what the Right Honourable Lord William Hanson was pleased to call "*his heart.*"

This same *heart* had seen a deal of service; but it is not our business to develope the past amours of this "scion of a noble house," particularly as the research could prove neither pleasurable nor profitable. At forty-five he led the blushing Fanny to the hyme-

neal altar: his own income was exceedingly small; but the moderate settlements of the alderman on his only child were accepted, as mines of wealth were expected at his death. The new-married pair spent some time on the Continent; and though Fanny was mortified at not being noticed by the Duke and Duchess of Canterton, still she was "*my lady*," and that made amends for all!

Mr. and Mrs. Gubbins did not long survive their daughter's elevation; and when Lord and Lady William Hanson returned to Danesford, on account of the shattered health of his lordship, the apothecary and his lady were at peace in the chancel of the church. On the death of the alderman, it appeared that he had lived beyond his means; and though Lord William continued to enjoy the income settled upon him at his marriage, the anticipated large fortune which was to come to him at the death of his father-in-law never was realised. He was encumbered with debt and difficulties; his health had been undermined by the excesses of his youth; and after grumbling on for a few years, at a cottage residence near Danesford, he died exactly one year before the date of the commencement of our story, leaving Lady William a disconsolate widow, with one little boy, then seven years of age.

Master George, until his father's death, was a neglected child; during his mother's year of mourning he was a spoiled one. For the first seven years of his life his parents were too dissipated to attend to him; and, during the year which followed, Lady William having no other amusement, made him her pet and her plaything.

"I cannot have you here, Georgy, just now," said

her ladyship. "Biggin, take the child away; and Fane, go you and fetch my box of feathers, and my drawer of lace, and the dresses I wore before my mourning; I want to see what I have got by me. George don't stand roaring there, but go to your nursery."

"I'll not go with Biggin," cried little Master George; "I will stay with my mamma."

"Do as you are bid, George, directly; and don't make such noise, or the people in the street will hear you."

"For shame, Master *Anson*!" cried his gouvernante; "I wonders at you."

"If you don't let me stay," roared George, "I'll go to the window and cry louder, that the people may hear, and I'll bring you all to shame."

"Biggin, take him away," said his mother.

"I won't be taken," shrieked the child.

"Go, dear, and I'll drive to Danesford and buy you a pretty puzzle."

"I won't have a puzzle," replied the boy; "I've puzzles enough, I'm sure, with my reading upstairs, without you're buying puzzles for me. Don't touch me, Betty. I'll kick you;—I won't go."

But Lady William repeated the order of dismissal, which Mrs. Biggin with much energy enforced; and Master George Hanson was carried from the chamber in a paroxysm of passion.

Such ungovernable rages were not of rare occurrence with Master George. We wish to make the reader thoroughly acquainted with him, and must therefore tell what perhaps is little to his credit. His nurse, Mrs. Biggin, like all other nurses, was fond of a drop of tea and a bit of chat. A worthy old

gossip of the neighbourhood once came in with her recently-born baby to while away an evening hour. The infant being fast asleep, and well wrapped up, was laid upon a chair, and the two dames began their prattle. Once or twice did Master George interrupt them, with an entreaty to be permitted to do something highly indiscreet: he was commanded to be quiet; and when his intrusion was repeated, Mrs. Biggin threatened him with chastisement. The little boy coloured up, and stamped with rage; and then snatching the baby from the chair, he ran to the fire-place, declaring he would burn it if his nurse and her guest did not instantly comply with his wishes. It is needless to say that the baby was rescued, and the spoiled child was rendered by concession even more ungovernable.

CHAPTER II.

No wonder if the child hath err'd,
When none have told him wrong from right;
If you neglect a favourite bird,
How can you blame its wayward flight?

When once again emancipated from the trammels of bombasin and crape, Lady William Hanson seemed resolved to make up for lost time. She wore roses beneath her bonnet, and feathers on the crown; her eyebrows were more darkly pencilled,—her cheeks more deeply rouged; and, after a few preliminary visits, and some ineffectual struggles from a refractory lady who had for years "taken the lead," she became undisputed queen of Danesford.

Let nobody suppose that we are bordering on the burlesque when we talk of her as a queen. The resident queen of a watering-place, though she may, in dress and demeanour, remind you of Dollalolla, is, in her own territory, a personage of real and tangible importance; and may possibly be quite as grand, and quite as influential, as many a petty potentate.

Her ladyship had now been two years a widow; for the last twelvemonths her time had been wasted in dissipation, and Master George, left to the misdirection of servants, had become an intolerable nuisance. She now inhabited furnished apartments in

the town of Danesford, and there we are now to seek her in her well-lighted drawing-room.

But the queen of Danesford had not as yet appeared in her audience-chamber. Mrs. Fane was still busily employed in giving the last finish to the regal toilet; the servants, having lighted the apartments, had descended to the hall, or rather passage (for a Danesford lodging-house boasted of but small accommodation between the street-door and the foot of the staircase); and Master George, now a fine handsome boy of nine years old, was in undisputed possession. "Row-de-dow, row-de-dow, row-de-dowdy-dow!" roared the young gentleman, marching about the room with an old cocked-hat upon his head—once the property of his late right honourable father,—in which was stuck an ostrich feather, *moulted* from the wardrobe of the widow; his pinafore, having been reversed, and hanging behind, was intended to represent a long-tailed coat; round his waist was his mother's best silk scarf, doing duty as a military sash; his upper lip was inked, in humble imitation of a captain of dragoons who had recently cheered the Danesford parties by his presence; and from his neck was suspended a small-sized plated waiter, which he had found in the drawing-room, and which he vigorously beat with two large silver spoons, pilfered from the supper-table. His little face was flushed with excitement as he stamped about the rooms; and still the cry was "Row-de-dow, row-de-dow, row-de-dow, de-dow!"

But a change came o'er the spirit of his dream;—his martial ardour took a nobler flight;—the spoons and waiter were thrown down, and, brandishing the hearth-brush, on which an unfinished square of

worsted work was fastened as a flag, the drummer-boy was self-promoted to an ensign, and marched about waving his banner, and shouting "Hurra! hurra! hurra!"

Suddenly there came a crash which resounded through the house, mingled with the shrieks of the now prostrate hero! A crash in the habitation of her ladyship was by no means an uncommon occurrence; nor were the howls of her heir-apparent at all likely to astonish her servants, or her immediate neighbours. But no former crash had equalled this, —never had George so unequivocally shouted with a voice of terror: every heart in the establishment palpitated; and Lady William, starting from her dressing-table, clasped her hands, exclaiming, "What *has* the boy done now!"

There was a rush towards the battle-field; but Mrs. Biggin was the first who reached the prostrate, and, alas! bleeding boy. By the time she had raised him from the ground, every member of the court, including her majesty, stood around him; and giving one energetic howl, louder than any that preceded it, he ran and buried his bloody forehead in the new white satin dress of his hitherto indulgent mother.

When it was ascertained that Master George was not only *alive* but *kicking*, the cause of the crash was very soon discovered. His banner had dislodged from the ceiling a glass chandelier of six branches, hired for the occasion; and it was most fortunate that, in its fall, it had only slightly grazed the forehead of the offender.

"Oh, the powers!" cried Mrs. Biggin, "Master George's head is a-bleeding."

"It serves him right," cried Lady William; "look at my chandelier! I hired it for the night, and must now pay its value!"

"My carpet, if you please, my lady!" said Mr. Tinkle, who let the lodgings, and had been called forth from the recesses of his shop by the commotion; "my carpet is utterly destroyed!"

At that moment a thundering double rap was heard at the door, and several guests were in succession announced.

The one man-servant, assisted by the hired waiter, was busy gathering up the broken glass, and judiciously disposing candlesticks to make amends for the defalcation of the much-admired chandelier. The cook, with a white basin, soap, and a towel, was obliterating from the carpet the stains which had discomposed Mr. Tinkle; while Lady William endeavouring to hide the marks of blood upon her dress, desired Master George to be carried to his chamber, and instantly to be put to bed.

Kicking, sprawling, and vociferating, the poor spoilt boy resisted the unwonted severity of those around him; but at length he was borne from the drawing-room, and the sound of his lamentations gradually died away.

To the temper of woman the fall of china is proverbially a trial; and no less so is the fall of a cut-glass chandelier, especially when we have hired it for fifteen shillings for the night, and, on account of its dilapidation, are called upon to pay as many pounds. But not less grievous than the destruction of old china and cut-glass, is the stain which prematurely sullies the lustre of white satin! Master

George received, on that eventful night, no kiss from his mamma; and, ere she placed her right honourable head upon her pillow, she had mentally resolved to set forth the following morning in quest of a school, where he might be taught better manners.

CHAPTER III.

Look at his gray hair,
  Look at his wrinkled brow;
And think he once was young, and fair,
  And full of hope, as thou!
Tell him that joy is nigh,
  That bright the future seems;
And thou wilt hear the old man sigh
  At thought of human schemes!

Let not the reader close our book under the impression that it will prove a mere nursery story,—a register of petty mischiefs, and the pains and penalties which are their consequences. We have an eventful tale to tell; but, in order to develope it properly, we conceive we cannot do better than begin *at the beginning*. Those who are hereafter interested in our events may then be able to trace them to their causes; and, though we tell a true story, (the real blended with the imaginary,) we trust, should any think it worth while to seek a moral in our pages, they will not fail to find one.

There are some few villages, situated almost within hearing of the busy hum of large and populous cities, and yet so beautifully tranquil and secluded, that, as you pace their unfrequented pathways, and gaze upon their humble cottages, you cannot but imagine yourself a hundred miles from the haunts of fashion, business, or depravity. Such a village was Mapleton. It consisted of a few strag-

gling cottages, irregularly built along the road: above it the hill rose abruptly, well wooded and clothed with verdure; and, a small distance below, you beheld the depth of the valley, where a clear swift stream ran over a pebbly bed, now distinctly visible, and now shadowed by the willow-trees that grew upon its banks, bending over as if to gaze upon the reflection of their own green and graceful branches. The cottages were all much alike,—neat, clean, and comfortable; each with its little plot of garden, gay in summer-time with roses, hollyhocks, and sunflowers. But there was not one that soared above the others with an affectation of gentility: there were no sash-windows,—no green rails,—no brass plate announcing the name of an apothecary,—and, stranger still, there was no shop. The distance from Danesford to Mapleton was only two miles; therefore, neither doctor nor dealer could hope to prosper at the latter. But on the rising ground that we have mentioned stood the old church, its tower garlanded with ivy; and near the porch grew a venerable yew-tree, spreading its massive arms over the few gravestones on which were inscribed the simple annals of the poor. Close to the churchyard there was a small white gate, which opened into a pretty garden belonging to the rectory-house,—a very old and unpretending building, which could not be seen at any distance: it being only two stories high, and the walls entirely covered with ivy, fruit-trees, and flowering creepers.

From about midway up the hill, the garden sloped down to the road, from which it was screened by a double row of chestnut-trees; and between them there was a path which, in the hottest day in sum-

mer, was cool and shaded. At the top of the garden there was a large cheerful summer-house; and immediately before it, in the centre of a little verdant lawn, there was a stone basin, about four feet deep, full to the very brim of the purest coldest water, being constantly supplied from a fountain which gushed from the hill above; and its perpetual overflow was carried off by a subterranean channel to the rivulet which watered the valley. This stone basin was guarded by an oval covering, made of strong green wire; and as the rector of Mapleton kept a school, and had two young children of his own, this precaution was by no means unnecessary.

There never lived a kinder-hearted man than the Reverend Mr. Leslie; but never was there one more unfit to be a schoolmaster. He was the mildest, the gentlest, the most amiable of beings; ignorant of the ways of the world, and blind to the failings of others. Now, a schoolmaster should certainly be mild, gentle, and amiable; but the mildness should on proper occasions be clothed in a frown, and the gentleness should wield the rod when actually necessary. He should be ever on the watch, seeing with half an eye the faults and follies of those who are sent to him to profit by his vigilance; and of the ways of the world he should at least have gained knowledge sufficient to guard them from the perils and temptations which, in those crooked paths, too surely will beset them.

Mr. Leslie's activity of mind had subsided into stagnation; his spirits had been early broken; and though as a private country clergyman he might have been admired for his meekness, patience, and resignation; in his public capacity,—as one who had undertaken to be the preceptor of youth,—he was

perhaps justly censured for bodily languor and apparent mental imbecility. Brought up at a public school, he had formed an intimate friendship with a young man much above him in rank and station. With the portionless youngest sister of his friend he had fallen in love; his addresses were not repulsed: on the contrary, his friend expressed his readiness to sanction the union as soon as he was sufficiently independent to claim a wife; and the girl herself, acknowledging that the attachment was mutual, formed an engagement with the young unbeneficed clergyman.

Years passed away, and still young Leslie was a curate: but his Katherine was constant; and though her relatives censured the apparently hopeless engagement, they still met daily, and fondly talked of happy days to come; but they came not. Leslie was depressed and miserable; and though his fair companion assumed an air of cheerfulness, and tried to raise his spirits, the bloom of her youth passed from her; and he attained the age of forty, and she was thirty-seven, before he was able to announce to her family any favourable change in his circumstances and prospects. He then became rector of the little village of Mapleton; and determined to add to the small stipend, by the establishment of a boys' school. And how happy were Mr. and Mrs. Leslie in their pretty but humble dwelling!—how happy in the enjoyment of each other's society, after a mortifying and almost hopeless engagement of twenty years! How happy! but, alas! for how brief a period! In the second year of their marriage poor Katharine Leslie died in giving birth to her second

child; and from that moment he became an inactive, spiritless, heart-broken man.

At the time of the commencement of our story he had been for seven years a widower: his eldest daughter, Kate, was eight years old; and child as she was, fair, gay, and volatile, she could already assume an air of matronly importance, as she affected to take care of her sister Fanny, who was but one year younger.

The boys, four-and-twenty in number, were at play in a field which adjoined the garden, under the superintendence of the usher; and in the summer-house sat Mr. Leslie, poring over a large book, while Katharine and Fanny sat near him busily employed,—the elder with a spelling-book, the younger with a doll. Carriage-wheels were heard approaching rapidly through the village; there was a violent peal on the bell at the gate; and then, after a few moments' delay, a servant crossed the garden to inform Mr. Leslie that Lady William Hanson was in the parlour with her little boy, and requested to speak with him directly.

It is unfortunate that Master George should always be introduced upon the stage in an unbecoming attitude; his mouth wide open to emit complaints, and his little features distorted with passion. We have never yet met with him in a tranquil and pacific humour; such humours indeed were of rare occurrence: to ensure such a blessing, it was absolutely necessary to let the young gentleman have his own way; and his way, young as he was, being always a mischievous one, he had already wearied the patience, not only of his own maid of honour, Mrs. Biggin, but also of his lady-mother and Mrs. Fane.

He was a remarkably handsome boy, his limbs stout and well-formed, his skin clear, his cheeks rosy, his hazel eyes large and brilliant, and his brown hair curling luxuriantly round his high white forehead. He had naturally a good disposition, warm affections, and kind feelings; but indulgence had already made him wilful, selfish, and arrogant.

"Go away, ugly old man," cried he, as Mr. Leslie approached her ladyship; "go away, I say; I will go home with my mamma."

"Mr. Leslie," said Lady William, "you perceive I bring you a very refractory pupil; but I trust your skill and experience will speedily correct him."

Mr. Leslie was very tall, very thin, and very bald: he was of course dressed in black, and his habiliments on week days were none of the newest: his knee-breeches were loose, and tied with riband in long bows that hung down what was nominally the calf of his leg; his black silk stockings were of the very coarsest texture; and his thick square-toed shoes came up high on the instep. He had a habit —not an uncommon one, we believe—of pushing up his spectacles on his forehead when he wished to see people distinctly: when perusing his book, they were invariably on his nose; but when he wished to interrogate a pupil, or inspect a visiter, he pushed them up, as if, instead of aiding, they impeded his sight; and, clasping his two hands behind his back, he opened his light gray eyes very wide, and stared at the object before him. He was exceedingly nervous, and generally silent; the sound of his own voice seemed to startle him. When circumstances roused him so far as to make him undertake the formation of a sentence, his courage failed him before

he got half through it, or a misgiving came over him that he should not express himself clearly. To a stranger, his peculiarities were ludicrous; but to the very few who knew him well, and remembered what he once had been, it was melancholy to observe the nervous want of reliance on his own powers, the absence of mind, and the utter incapability of feeling interested about persons present and immediate occurrences. This arose from the prostration of a once sanguine mind, and a gloomy habit of brooding over past visions of happiness, all of which had ended in disappointment. The best years of his life had been wasted in the sickness of his heart which is proverbially the result of "*hope deferred;*" and when at length a blameless and rational enjoyment of life, shared with the long-tried and dearly-loved companion of his early choice, seemed within his grasp, he found himself a widower, alone in the world, possessed indeed of a moderate competence, but deprived of her for whose sake he had so long desired it, and so exulted when it was obtained.

These are severe trials to the intellect of a man who lives in retirement. A worldly man would have felt them less; but to the worldly man they would never have happened: for the adverse circumstances which seemed to oppose an insurmountable barrier between him and his *first* love, would have driven him, *nominally* broken-hearted, back to the pursuits or the dissipations of society, where a second attachment would in all probability have obliterated the first; or, at all events, occupation, and what is called pleasure, would have worn away the acuteness of his regret, and prevented his becoming in

reality an oddity, and even now and then incurring the imputation of being *cracked.*

With his spectacles perched astride on the summit of his bald head, Mr. Leslie approached his intended pupil with the intention of trying the soothing system; a system from which he rarely deviated.

"My dear young gentleman," said he, holding out his hand, "never give way to irritability."

"Get away, ugly old man," exclaimed George again, aiming a kick at the shins of the preceptor, who retreated with dismay.

"For shame, George!" said Lady William; "I hope Mr. Leslie has got a very large rod for naughty boys."

"Nay," said Mr. Leslie, "the use of the rod I reckon a custom more honoured in the breach,—I mean—hem!—I never flog the boys."

"Never!" exclaimed her ladyship, whilst George for the first time ceased to sob, and ventured to cast a glance at the divine.

"Never, my lady," he replied; "I have not nerve: the act of flagel—that is, if flogging is unavoidable, I leave it to the usher."

"I consider discipline necessary," said Lady William Hanson; "but if naughtiness be corrected, I care not by whom. George, Mr. Leslie will allow you to go and look at his garden, while he and I talk the business over."

The owner of the garden of course readily assented; and George, only too happy to escape from so dull a controversy, ran through a door which opened to the lawn.

"And now, sir," said Lady William, "it is desira-

ble that we should thoroughly understand each other."

"Of course, madam."

"The boy has been spoilt at home," said her ladyship.

"Cruel to spoil—" began Leslie in reply.

"I beg your pardon, sir," said lady William, "but I do not expect you to comment on my conduct: I ask you to teach my child."

"And I will conscientiously discharge——"

"No doubt," interrupted her ladyship; "but you will understand that you are not to interfere with his religion and morals."

"My lady!" exclaimed the preceptor in amazement.

"No, no," she continued, "I know very well you country parsons have particular notions; but I must have no puritanical ideas, no cant, nothing methodistical inculcated."

"I am an orthodox member of the church of England."

"No doubt," said her ladyship; "but my child must come home to me on Saturday, and spend his Sundays at home; and, in fact, I wish you not to interfere."

"I'm sure I honour any parent who feels it to be a paramount duty——"

"Sir!" said Lady William, looking at him through her glass.

"Who attends to her childs best interests," continued Mr. Leslie, dropping his voice, and also his spectacles, which were replaced upon his nose in the agitation of the moment. "I honour you, my lady, for your parental anxiety."

"George must come to me every Saturday," said Lady William, "to have his dancing-lessons; I cannot trust essentials to any one but myself."

"And he will remain the Sundays with your ladyship?" inquired Mr. Leslie.

"Certainly."

"Then his collects, his catechism, and his attendance at divine worship——"

"Good morning, Mr. Leslie," said her ladyship rising; "I never discuss serious subjects on ordinary occasions; I consider it almost profane to do so."

"You are entrusting to me the temporal and spiritual guardianship of your only child; it is surely no ordinary occasion," said Mr. Leslie, roused for a moment from his customary apathy.

"You are no methodist, I trust, sir?"

"None, madam; unless, indeed, you reckon every religious man a methodist."

"No, no, all very proper, very right indeed; the clergy should be strict, and schoolmasters in particular: but as George is to be a gentleman——"

"Madam?"

"I mean as George is to be of no profession, I wish him not to be infected with notions inconsistent with the bias of his family."

"As your son, my lady, will visit you once a week, you will have an opportunity of judging whether undue interference has——"

"True, sir," interrupted her ladyship, who had become rather weary of the discussion; "you will therefore remember that his dancing will be attended to at home, and—and his religion, and that sort of thing; in other matters, I trust your discipline will be strict."

"Not injudiciously lax, I hope," said Mr. Leslie; "but one who knows by experience how rarely sunshine enlivens manhood and age, must be reluctant to throw one unnecessary shadow over the thoughtless joyous path of infancy and youth." He spoke with deep feeling, which accounts for the unwonted coherence of his sentence; and, once more pushing up his spectacles to the summit of his forehead, he wiped away a tear.

Never had Lady William Hanson felt so thoroughly out of her element: she thought, and not without some reason, that Mr. Leslie was a very eccentric man; rang for her carriage, and inquired for her son, who appeared grasping with both hands an immense nosegay which he had gathered from poor Kate Leslie's own garden, in spite of her earnest entreaties and bitter tears. The spoiled child left her bemoaning over her rifled flower-beds, and, entering the carriage with his mother, he left the Rectory of Mapleton; to which, however, he was doomed to return on the following Monday, with his little trunk, a knife and fork, and a silver spoon.

CHAPTER IV.

She fumes and she frets, she examines and mends,
And she orders about her and superintends.

Mr. Leslie was fortunate in having two most exemplary and useful persons in his little establishment; a tutor whose plain good sense and active habits made amends for his own languor and absence of mind; and a respectable elderly woman, who took the entire charge of his two daughters.

Mr. Ibbotson, the tutor, was the son of a very respectable bookseller in Danesford: he had been the pupil of Mr. Leslie's predecessor, and under his auspices had acquired, not only "a *little* knowledge," which is "a dangerous thing," but an imperfect cognisance of a great deal of learning, which is much more dangerous. He had just an inkling of all the arts, and all the sciences, and all particularly well-known historical facts. He knew nothing—indeed, could not be expected to know any thing—of society; and, when accidentally thrown among those who were not acquainted with his peculiarities, his unsolicited explanations of subjects which were never expected to be explained, were, if not taken in a ludicrous light, exceedingly embarrassing to persons of limit-

ed information. Mr. Leslie's academy was merely a preparatory one, and Mr. Ibbotson was fully competent to instruct the very young gentlemen who were in the habit of attending it.

Mrs. Podd, the housekeeper, was just the very best woman in the world; not the best corporeally constructed, certainly, for she was exceedingly small, and had one leg shorter than the other: but there was no deformity about her heart. Nobody knew how old she was, for she did not like to be interrogated on the subject; every body thought she must be very old indeed, for none could call to mind a period at which she had looked younger; but still her activity was surprising, and her spirits never seemed to flag. She was very fond of dress, and on Sundays always wore a showy gown, and a big bonnet with cherry-coloured ribands. She was the presiding genius of Mapleton Rectory; nothing was well done unless she did it. Not that the diminutive and lame housekeeper was unmercifully driven to exertions beyond her strength: on the contrary, she took it amiss if any other member of the household was employed on any errand of sufficient importance to claim her notice; and if she discovered that any body had voluntarily done any thing with the intention of saving her trouble, she invariably found it expedient to undo all that had been done, merely that she might be able to do it all over again. She never found fault if she could possibly avoid it: it was to her less painful, and far easier, to remedy with her own fingers the blunders of others, than to bring them into trouble by making a formal complaint.

"I must say, Mrs. Podd," said Ibbotson, "I never

saw the stairs of Mapleton Rectory in such a condition as this!"

"I don't deny it, but it's no fault of mine," replied the housekeeper; "that new boy, George Hanson, would turn a palace topsy-turvy. There never was such a spoiled urchin."

"Nobody knows that better than myself," said the tutor; "he is sent here to be taught, forsooth, and at the same time correction is forbidden. His mother sends him from home because she can no longer tolerate his behaviour; and yet we, to whose care she entrusts him, are prohibited from making him better!"

"Patience, and he'll mend," replied Mrs. Podd.

"Mend what!" exclaimed Ibbotson,—"the articles he has broken since he entered the house? it will consume all his pocket-money: or is it himself that he's to mend? past mending, I fear. It is perfectly well known that, in the education of their children, the parents of ancient Rome maintained strict discipline, and—"

"I beg your pardon, sir," interrupted Mrs. Podd, "I never can take an interest in those old Romans; you know best how they managed their poor brats, of course. But they are no examples for us; and, as for Master Hanson, really, when one considers he's a sort of a kind of a sprig of nobility——"

"I know not *that;* but this I know, there's no nobility in mischief."

"He'll get the better of that," said kind Mrs. Podd; "and how handsome he is!"

"Handsome is as handsome does."

"I ought to have known you would say so," re-

plied she; "and it is presumption in me to argue with a scholar, but——"

"Nay, Mrs. Podd," said Ibbotson, "I have as little severity about me as yourself; but really, Hanson is so ungovernable that——"

"Where are my dancing-shoes?" cried George, running towards the disputants; "mamma desired me to practise my steps, and somebody has taken away my pumps."

"Never mind them to-day," said the usher; "we'll do a bit of arithmetic instead."

"I hate 'rithmetics," cried George, "and I will have my pretty pumps."

"Don't be angry, dear," whispered Mrs. Podd; "I'll go and look for them:" and away she went, while George followed her to the door, irreverently mimicking the irregularity of her steps, and feigning a short leg.

"Oh, fie!" said Ibbotson.

"Don't oh fie me," cried George, strutting back with both legs perfectly straight; "no oh fie, at all. Do you know my grandpapa's a lord?"

"If your grandpapa be a lord, it the more behoves you to be a gentleman."

"And that's why I want to learn to dance," said George.

"Well," replied Ibbotson, "I never danced myself, but it is a practice of great antiquity. The Greeks danced, the Romans danced; Plutarch calls dancing a mute conversation; Aristotle says something about dancing too, but I don't just remember what: no matter, though I never did dance myself, I can make allowances."

"Oh bother!" cried George; "where are my pumps?"

"Here, pet," exclaimed Mrs. Podd, with good-natured exultation; "here they are, and now I'll help you to put them on;" and she suited the action to the word.

"And I'll go into the play-ground," said Ibbotson: "and be sure, Hanson, you know your repitition when I call you."

Away went the usher; and George, having put on his dancing-shoes, began exhibiting his proficiency to Mrs. Podd, who was desired to hum a tune to facilitate his movements. This she did readily, for she never said 'no' to any body if she could possibly help it; and loudly, though not very harmoniously, did she sing, while George capered round her. At length he exhausted the varieties of his *pas seul*, and requested Mrs. Podd to join him in a *pas de deux*: he would hear of no denial; and the good-natured old body, tucking up the tail of her gown through her pocket-hole, and continuing her song, utterly forgetful of her short leg, took hold of George by his two hands, and danced up the room, and down the room, and round the room, and this way, and that way; until, happening to face the door, she perceived Mr. Leslie gazing on her, with his spectacles pushed up to the very top of his head, and by his side stood the Right Honourable Lady William Hanson, with infinite difficulty smothering a laugh. Mrs. Podd suddenly stopped, said nothing, and hobbled out of the room as fast as her very ill-matched legs could carry her; and George, uttering a shout of surprise, ran and embraced his mother.

"Have you brought me any thing good?" said he.

"Plenty of *bonbons*," replied her ladyship; "and I am glad to find you have not forgotten your dancing, for I wish you to exhibit in public, though not exactly with the partner you had chosen."

Lady William soon informed Mr. Leslie and her delighted son, that her object in seeking the Rectory that day was to prepare the latter for a grand ball to be given by his dancing-master, Monsieur Bonvarlet, at the assembly-rooms of Danesford.

The celebrated Terpsichorean preceptor had the honour of teaching steps to several schools; and his assembled scholars, both masters and misses, were to exhibit on this eventful evening. The young gentlemen were all to be attired in a uniform: sky-blue jackets with silver sugar-loaf buttons, a white silk waistcoat embroidered with silver, white trousers, and a fanciful cap and feather. There was also a *regulation* dress for the young ladies. George was in an ecstasy; his judicious mother had brought with her in the carriage his ball-dress to be tried on; and though Mr. Leslie calmly notified that the bell which her ladyship heard ringing was a summons to the studies of the afternoon, she declared that George must have a half-holiday, and, without waiting for a reply, she added,

"Pray, my good sir, leave us to try if these gay habiliments fit; and if you will kindly send me that elderly lady, whose dance I interrupted, to assist George at his toilet, you will add to the obligation."

Mr. Leslie hesitated for a moment, as if conscious that it was his duty to point out to a vain and frivolous mother the impropriety of distracting the mind of a child so recently committed to his care, and of whose ignorance, idleness, and insubordination she

had so loudly complained. But he felt unequal to the task, and, replacing his spectacles on his nose, he bowed and quitted the room.

Mrs. Podd soon made her appearance, hobbling in, and making a *pat-pat* noise on the floor with the high shoe that was intended to make her short leg in some degree act as fellow to the long one. The recollection of having been detected in the performance of her *pas de deux* with young Hanson had flushed her countenance; and to hide that, and end as soon as possible the awkwardness that she felt, she went instantly down on her knees, and busily employed herself in the arrangement of her late partner's new dress.

When her task was finished, George proudly strutted up and down the parlour to the infinite delight of his mother: Mrs. Podd was loud in the expression of her admiration, and went *pat-pat* backwards and forwards, and round the little beau, to examine his costume.

Suddenly Master George darted to the door, and merely exclaiming, "Mamma, I'll be back in a minute," he ran off, calling for somebody at the very highest pitch of his voice.

"Where upon earth is the boy gone to!" exclaimed Lady William; "I must take back his dress with me to have some alterations made, and I cannot possibly wait five minutes longer."

"Oh, my lady," said the ever bland Mrs. Podd, "boys will be boys; and Master Hanson has only run away to show his fine clothes: very natural."

"Good gracious!" replied the anxious mother; "gone where? to show them to whom? not to the boys in the dirty school-room, I trust."

"No, not there I think," answered the house-keeper; "not that the school-room *is* dirty, *I* take care of that; but, depend on it, Master Hanson is gone to exhibit himself to the young ladies."

"Young ladies!" said Lady William.

"Yes, my lady; you never saw them, perhaps! —the sweetest children, our Kate and Fanny."

"And who, in the name of patience, my good woman, may our Kate and Fanny be?"

"Dear me, my lady!" exclaimed Podd, "did you never see them? oh! then it's a pleasure to come: the two Miss Leslies, my lady; I'll go and fetch them." And away she went with her usual quick, though irregular motion; and the customary *pat-pat* was heard in the passage, and on the stairs, long after she was out of sight.

Lady William seemed doomed to await the pleasure of her son; she therefore seated herself, trusting that Mrs. Podd would soon discover him, and bring him back. Several minutes elapsed, and no one came near her, when at last she heard somebody open a window of an upper chamber; and a glass door, which led from the parlour to the garden, not being closed, she could hear Mrs. Podd calling very loudly, "Master Hanson, where are you? come in directly, sir. Miss Kate, Miss Fanny, I'll be out in a minute if you don't come in."

The voice of a child crying loudly for help was then heard; there was a hurried noise in the room overhead, *pat-pat-pat* more unequal and quick than usual on the stairs and through the passage; and then the house-keeper, pale as a spectre, glided into the parlour, crossed it, and instantly disappeared into the garden. It was evident that something very un-

usual had occurred; and Lady William, after listening in perplexity to various confused noises, rang the bell.

The mystery was soon explained: Mrs. Podd re-entered from the lawn, bearing in her arms Master George, who, wet to the skin from head to foot, was roaring as loud as he could bawl, partly with anger, and partly with fright. George had, as Mrs. Podd wisely conjectured, gone in quest of Kate and Fanny, but especially the former, who was his especial favourite; and knowing that they were likely to be playing in the summer-house, thither he had bent his steps. Many were their exclamations of astonishment and delight on seeing his new dress; and George, elated by their admiration, began to exhibit on the lawn his proficiency in the art of dancing, now gliding to the right, and then to the left,—shuffling forwards to the door of the summer-house, and then receding in Monsieur Bonvarlet's most approved style. But, alas! like many older people, who, though they ought to know better, neglect to consider whither they are going, the elated exhibitor receded too far, made a false step, and fell backwards head-over-heels into the little reservoir of water, which, though generally covered with a green wire fence to prevent the possibility of such accidents, had this day been opened by the gardener, who had been removing weeds from the interior, and had left the spot for a few minutes. George's situation was one of real peril; and as the two little spectators who witnessed with terror this tragical *finale* to his animated *ballet* could do nothing but cry, he might briefly have ended his career, had not Mrs. Podd, alarmed by the screams of the children reached the spot in time to

flump down in a sitting posture on the edge of the basin, with her unfortunate legs dangling in the water; and leaning forward, she made a successful grasp at the collar of George's blue jacket, extricated him from his danger, and then withdrawing her legs from their very cold immersion, and regaining the perpendicular,—that is, as much as she was ever known to do so,—she went *pat-pat* over the gravel walk, and, followed by the still terrified girls, made her appearance before Lady William.

Her ladyship was an experienced fainter, and had the gift of screaming on all occasions equal to any lady of fashion or heroine of romance. Shrill was her outcry at the sudden appearance of the semi-saturated old woman and her really half-drowned burthen; and had it not been for her rouge, she would have changed colour as entirely as her poor child's sky-blue jacket. Kind Mrs. Podd always had her wits about her: she untied a silk handkerchief from the neck of the struggling boy, ran to Lady William, who had sunk fainting on a chair, and wringing it over her, drenched her face and parts of her lilac pelisse with the water of which it was full; she then rushed to the bell and rang it violently, and, without uttering one word, limped out of the room, and *pat-patted* up stairs with a velocity hitherto unparalleled. The little girls ran to their father, and by their incoherent account gave him an idea that something serious had occurred. He soon reached the parlour, where Lady William, having recovered from her syncope, was giving vent to alternate rage and terror. Before Mr. Leslie could utter a word, she insisted upon being taken to her child; and when the good man with truth declared that he had supposed

he was with her ladyship, she replied that she would seek him herself, and, followed at a respectful distance by the bewildered schoolmaster, she mounted the stairs, and ran successively into every bedchamber on the first floor: but her search was vain, and loudly calling on her son, she entreated him to tell her where he was. She then heard the shrill but cheerful voice of Mrs. Podd, who cried, "Here we are, my lady, snug and comfortable." Following the sound, her ladyship passed through a narrow whitewashed passage which led to the servants' apartments, and entering the humble one which was appropriated to the use of the housekeeper, she found that venerable dame cuddled up in bed between the blankets, with her own son and heir,—both their heads upon one pillow, and both seeming to enjoy the fun of the remedy now that the actual danger was at an end.

CHAPTER V.

I have dreamt of fairy favours,
  Of the gold that lies conceal'd,
Where no outward mark betrays it,
  In the poor man's sterile field.
Is not INDUSTRY the fairy
  Who can call these favours forth,
Who can raise a golden harvest
  From the bosom of the earth?

THANKS to Mrs. Podd's precautionary measures, George caught no cold; and the next day his judicious mother sent her carriage for him, briefly informing Mr. Leslie in a note that she intended keeping him at home until Monsieur Bonvarlet's ball was over. The ball was fixed for that day fortnight; and there were to be morning rehearsals at the dancing-school, and generally one every evening at the house of the parents of one of the pupils; and there were to be two dress rehearsals at the rooms: in fact, for fourteen days, dancing was to be uppermost in Master George's mind.

In the days of mourning and monotony he had been his mother's pet and plaything: when weeds were to be thrown aside, he with the weeds had been discarded, and had been sent from home when his society was no longer necessary, and his presence

interfered with her projects of gayety and dissipation. And now again, after a brief stay with persons who were beginning to gain a salutary influence over him, she snatched him from their guidance, and took him home, merely because it would gratify her own vanity to dress him up like a little mountebank, and hear him praised as one of Monsieur Bonvarlet's best pupils.

Mr. Leslie had in vain assured her that the future bias of his mind and temper towards good or evil depended in a great measure on the regularity with which his education was pursued. We now see him abandoned to the influence of one of those abominations, a dancing-master's exhibition ball! His dress was canvassed as a matter of paramount importance; there were morning practisings and evening rehearsals, late hours, cake and wine, and the never-failing voice of flattery! Lady William Hanson smiled upon these frivolous pursuits, and talked of emulation!—what have not such parents to answer for!

We are by no means to be numbered among those wise or strict personages who ridicule dancing as a folly, or condemn it as a fault. We have heard people, by no means notorious for the wisdom of their proceedings, utter a contemptuous tirade against dancing, concluding with the rather stale observation, "What would you think if you went into a room with your ears stopped, and saw the men and women hopping about?"

By stopping our ears, we should become deaf to the music, which is not only a necessary adjunct to the art of dancing, but is actually that which inspires it. The pleasure derived from dancing arises from movements of the body and limbs to the mea-

sure of a melody; and we have generally observed that the man who has uttered the above oft-repeated common-place has been one whose ear did not enable him to distinguish one tune from another.

We do not object to a mother's anxiety that her son should learn to dance: we quarrel not with the cook who serves a dish of flummery to our table; if the flummery be good, we should be sorry to be without it: but we must have the solids first; the flummery must be an auxiliary to the dinner, not the dinner itself. Dancing is a good garnish to education; but we must neither live upon dancing, nor upon flummery. Master George skipped about Monsieur Bonvarlet's academy, and skipped his lessons at Mapleton, until, having overheated himself and kept late hours, he was laid up with a violent attack of scarlet fever; and in addition to the fortnight devoted to folly by his mother, he was absent from school for three months, on account of his very dangerous illness, and the weakness which was its result.

When he did return to Mapleton, though considerably grown, he was so pale and thin that Mrs. Podd did not at first recognise him; but when she did, she snatched him to her arms and embraced him tenderly, forgetting that, having been engaged in making walnut catsup, her hands were stained with the juice of the fruit.

"Oh, don't,—you're so dirty!" cried George.

"No, no; or if I am, it's all clean dirt," replied the good woman. "But come to me, Master George, when I'm making the preserves, and you'll not complain of my hands being stained with raspberries;" and as an earnest of what she might be expected to

do when summer fruits were ripe, she gave him a spoonful of jam from the stores of the preceding year, little suspecting how often he had feloniously helped himself when her back was turned.

George loved jam, and began also to love Mrs. Podd. She was very kind to him; and the poor invalid having worn out his mother's patience, felt and appreciated the kindness of the old housekeeper, and enjoyed the society of his little playfellows, Kate and Fanny, with whom he was permitted to associate whilst he was too weak to join the other boys in the play-ground.

Delicate health was now an additional obstacle to George Hanson's progress in the path of knowledge. He was a quick, clever boy, remembering in a surprising manner things that were never intended to be impressed upon his mind. His mother had several times taken him to the Danesford theatre; and of the plays and the scenes, and the dresses of the actors, he had a remarkably distinct recollection. He would also often pick up a book accidentally thrown in his way, and would sit for hours poring over it, entirely engrossed by the story, and long afterwards quoting its details: but give him a lesson to learn, and his faculties appeared numbed; he would plod at it with a miserable blank face for a long time, and then, when interrogated, would not know three words. On these occasions he looked like a fool, though he was none. With such a boy it is late at ten years of age to begin a system of education. Such things may be done by persons of powers adequate to the task; but, with the best intentions in the world, Mr. Leslie was not the man to do them. George had been irregularly treated: now

a *pet*, and now a *pest;* encouraged one day to do wrong, and punished the next for not doing right; idle in a dull week, because his mother, having no engagements, wanted him to amuse her; and then left to learn a task under the superintendence of Mrs. Biggin, because she had parties to go to, or company to receive, and could not be bored with his noise. A judicious union of undeviating firmness and kindness might still have done much for him; but the schoolmaster thus gifted is one in a thousand, and Mr. Leslie, with all his good qualities, was not *that one.*

But ignorance, though bad in itself, was not the worst result of Lady William Hanson's selfish and injudicious treatment of her child. The poor little fellow's word was never to be relied upon; and nothing that was tempting was safe if left within his reach. Such are the inevitable fruits of idleness.

CHAPTER VI.

Though *childhood*, when tutored by art, prematurely
May imitate man in look, action, and tone,
Life's summer will not be forestall'd, and too surely
The charm of life's spring-time for ever is gone!

HOWEVER wild and ungovernable boyhood may be, we are naturally inclined to linger over these petty details of faults and follies, rather than to hurry onwards to the period when it may be our task to trace the reckless career of youth, or the vices and the sufferings of manhood. Besides, in dwelling on George's irregularities, we point rather to the foolish indiscretion of the mother than to its result, the errors of the child; and we thus hold up a weak, vain woman as a warning to parents, because in the individual instance before us we trace to education the events of George Hanson's future life; and because generally we affirm, that no boy so brought up, if he have quick feelings and strong passions, can, as it is termed, "*turn out well.*" Is it not natural that the selfishness of the parents should be engrafted on the child? And what are most of the errors of manhood but self-gratification, blind and deaf to the feelings and remonstrances of others?

George was what is called by persons who glance but at the surface of character, a most affectionate child. He had great warmth of feeling, and always acted upon the impulse of the moment; he therefore quickly formed attachments to those who in-

dulged him. He would readily do for them any good-natured act which promoted their gratification, and which at the same time gave himself no trouble: but, to accommodate them, he would not resign the most trifling anticipated amusement; and even a gentle suggestion that it might be postponed to a more convenient season would throw him into a paroxysm of rage.

As he grew older, his personal appearance greatly improved, and the charm of his graceful figure and intelligent countenance was aided by an earnest warmth of manner quite irresistible with those he wished to please; and all others he treated with indifference, if not with contempt.

Children brought up *irregularly* cannot be expected to become attached to their parents. The over-indulgence of one week is neutralised by the neglect or undue severity of the next; and, indeed, the injustice will be remembered long after the endearments are forgotten. The child who is uniformly treated as it deserves, rewarded for good conduct, and corrected for idleness or mischief, is quite aware that those who are in authority over it are merely doing their duty: or, at all events, in a very few years it gains sufficient knowledge of right and wrong to judge whether or not it was *its own fault* when indulgence was withheld and punishment inflicted.

George loved home, for, like all boys, he loved idleness; and never was there a more idle house than his mother's. But there was so little method in her capricious indulgence of him when it suited her to have him with her, and so little justice in her neglect and indifference when she thought proper to send him away "because he was too much for her,"

that the poor boy would have been blind indeed had he not perceived that when she sought him and when she shunned him, self-gratification was all she thought of. It was not thus that she could ever hope to win the affections of her child: she did not win them, but her example made George as selfish as herself.

At fifteen he was still an inmate of Mr. Leslie's *preparatory* school. Mr. Leslie had more than once conscientiously hinted that it was high time her ladyship should remove him to one of the public schools, or to a private tutor: but Lady William soon ascertained that a removal of this kind would entail a very considerable increase of expense; and as her income merely consisted of five hundred a-year, settled upon her by her father, when he and her mother were silly enough to be gratified at her marrying a lord, she was the last person in the world likely to deny herself any indulgence, that she might give her only child superior advantages, or promote his future interests.

The income which she enjoyed was settled upon her boy: and at the decease of an uncle of her late husband, his property, which was considerable, was settled upon the Duke of Canterton's younger children and their heirs: so that George was sure of enjoying eventually an adequate independence. When he was in his sixteenth year, his mother was attacked with a sudden and hopeless illness; and then indeed, when it was too late, she earnestly desired to atone for past neglect, and to take some step to prevent her child's being thrown upon the world uninformed and unprotected, without steady principles, and without a real friend. Not knowing where else

to seek one, she sent to Mapleton, entreating that Mr. Leslie would visit her without delay: and when a dying woman made it her last request that he would continue to give her boy the shelter of his roof, he was not the man who could utter a denial. The selfish are always violent in the expression of their griefs; they are unaccustomed to suffering, and they peremptorily exact sympathy from others. George gave a brief vent to his distress, and was then exceedingly particular about his mourning; and having taken care that every body should be miserable as long as he was so, he expected that every body should be ready to contribute to his amusement as soon as he was ready to be amused.

And here again was a new excuse for idleness. Who could force the orphan lad from morning walks with those whose conversation pleased him, or from the evening perusal of such books as he thought proper to select from the circulating library at Danesford?—if selection it could be called, when the worst were devoured as eargerly as the best.

There were, of course, ample funds from which to repay Mr. Leslie for the board and lodging of the young gentleman, who had signified that it was his intention to employ the best masters in Danesford for all the acquirements and accomplishments which Mr. Leslie and his assistant did not profess to teach. Mr. Leslie warmly applauded him for the intention, and never once doubted that it would be realised. The worthy rector was now nearly eight years older than when we first introduced him to the reader; and if at forty-nine we found him utterly unfit to govern little boys of six or eight years old, it may be presumed that at fifty-seven he would himself be

easily ruled by a fine spirited youth of seventeen. George was called a parlour boarder: tuition in his case was not to be thought of. He had an apartment fitted up for his own exclusive use, and very soon insinuated a horse into the rector's stable, and half a dozen dogs into his yard.

Mr. Ibbotson, a mere lad when first he lectured this unwilling pupil, was now twenty-four; Mrs. Podd, who never had been known to look younger than when we first knew her, now looked much the same as ever; and though the tutor had long since ceased to exert even the semblance of control over George, the housekeeper still would go *pat-pat* after him, and scold him for not changing his stockings when his feet were wet. In fact, though always his butt, she seemed to have more influence over him than any of the family, *with one exception.* That *one* was the fair Katherine, the eldest daughter of Mr. Leslie, who at sixteen was not only the rose of Mapleton, but the prettiest girl in the county.

Never had two orphan girls made better use of the few advantages which had been thrown in their way than Kate and Jane Leslie. We ought to have given the entire credit to the elder sister; for Jane, though only one year younger, was much more infantine in person, manner, and intellect, and had always looked up to her sister with the fond eyes of dependence, taking from her every action the hint how she ought to act herself.

Katherine, almost as soon as she could walk and talk, had felt the necessity of using her legs and her tongue in the service of her father, her little sister, and herself. There had never been a superabundance of domestics in the Rectory: if she wanted any thing,

she therefore early acquired the excellent habit of going and fetching it. They could not recollect their mother—to their father and Mr. Ibbotson they were indebted for their education; and as they learned the Latin grammar with the younger boys, and Kate had an active mind that eagerly pursued any branch of knowledge of the elements of which she had been allowed to catch a glimpse, she—and, in a somewhat less degree, her sister—soon knew a good deal of a language with which most young ladies are unacquainted.

But Kate from the gravest studies would walk away to the kitchen or the store-closet, and, in defiance of the excellent and all-engrossing Podd, who thought that nothing could be done well unless she did it herself, she would superintend the dishes which her father was most fond of, and make with her own hands the pudding which she had heard George Hanson praise.

The two sisters were always well dressed: they were not without the very natural feminine anxiety to know the latest fashions for sleeves and bodies, and, living in the neighbourhood of so populous a town as Danesford, information on such subjects was easily acquired. But every thing that they wore was cut out and made by themselves; and though the materials were never costly, and the colours never glaring, no one could meet with them without being struck with the elegance of their appearance. But their dress and demeanour were perfectly consistent with their father's means and station in society: they never could be surprised in a costume that would disgrace them in a fashionable promenade; yet meeting them in the retired fields and

lanes about Mapleton, no one could accuse them of being overdressed.

We are aware that we are dwelling on trifles; but trifles alone can render us acquainted with beings so young and unpretending, who lived in total retirement. Instead of indulging in such homely, tranquil details, it will too soon be our lot to accompany one of them in her departure from this happy valley.

CHAPTER VII.

Oh, what a beautoous thing is love! how happy and how pure!
Thus springing up in two young hearts, from present ills secure,
Assuming friendship's name, it quite forgets that friends must sever,—
As if such friends through this cold world went hand in hand for ever!
A fountain in a lonely vale resembles such a dream:
Now nothing but the clear blue sky is mirror'd in the stream;
Beside the valley's loveliest path its infancy is led;
Its bank is lined with violets, with softest moss its bed.
But the stream must leave the lonely vale, the violets, and the moss,
And struggle on into the world, where restless billows toss;
Its purity reflects no more the bright expanse above,
And the calmness of its course is lost—Oh! is't not so with love?

Another year flew by; and if George at eighteen called himself a man, Katherine at seventeen really was a very fine young woman. The admirable plan of employing masters at Danesford for the acquirement of the very many branches of knowledge of which George was ignorant, had never yet been put in practice. Day after day, and week after week, the alarming *first step* was always postponed: and the longer we have thought about doing a thing, and the oftener we have on trivial excuses put it off, the more natural does it seem to go on thinking about it, and still to postpone the doing, until at last we persuade ourselves it is too late to do it at all. And this was the case with George, who had, during the two years which had elapsed since his mother's

death, employed no masters, excepting the master of the *manège* at Danesford, and a musician to give him lessons on a new-invented flageolet,—which instrument he selected, in spite of its inveterate squeak, because he was told it was the easiest to play upon in the world.

"Kate," cried he one morning, "Kate, where are you?—come down;" and he called louder, and threw pebbles at her casement to make his impatience the more apparent.

"What do you want?" said a sweet voice; and at the same moment the window opened, and the fairest and freshest of female faces looked down upon him.

"I want you, Kate: come and walk with me."

"With pleasure. Jane, go and get ready."

"Now, why can't you do as you are bid, without calling Jane? She will be ages looking for her shawl and her bonnet; but you are always ready in a moment."

Kate laughed, and disappeared from the window; and in three minutes she stood by his side on the lawn.

"There's a dear good girl! Now take my arm."

"And you won't wait for Jane?"

"Certainly not," he replied; and arm-in-arm they ran off towards the path which meandered by the side of the rivulet.

Precious moments are those when the boy and girl, who have been playmates all their days, first throw aside the sports of childhood, and first walk and talk together with somewhat of the seriousness of riper years—with all the watchful attention of manhood on his part, and all the confiding affection

of womanhood on hers, yet without a thought of love on either side, and without a dread of being accused of a flirtation!

Moments so pure and happy are brief indeed! The stripling soon thinks himself a man, and whispers to his former playfellow the word which promises bliss, but which at once ends the unconscious simplicity with which she has been accustomed to seek him. The girl may well rely on the truth of one whom she has known from infancy, believing that she has seen in the boy the virtues whose maturity will adorn the man. But intercourse with the world too often brings out the dark shades of character, hitherto almost imperceptible; while the glimmerings of better qualities, which have won her good opinion, become darkened, if not altogether extinguished.

But it is not only the premature assumption of manhood on the one side, nor feminine consciousness on the other, that ends the free unfettered association of beings as young and beautiful as the pair who now sauntered beneath the willow trees in the green valley of Mapleton. Old age, with its gossip, steps officiously forth to mar this brief season of enjoyment; and seventeen cannot show a preference for sixteen, nor can sixteen wander alone with seventeen in any green valley for many weeks together, without suspicions being excited, inquiries instituted, and spies appointed; and at the very time George Hanson was walking by the side of Kate Leslie, several persons, having watched their departure from the Rectory, were debating the probability of a match between the lord's son and the parson's pretty daughter.

As yet, however, no consciousness of such an imputation interfered with the unrestrained freedom of their most innocent intimacy; and, having reached the shaded path, they wandered side by side, just as they would have done five years before, when weary of the hoop or the skipping-rope.

"I should die of the dulness of Mapleton, Kate," said he, "if it were not for a chat and a saunter now and then with you."

"The dulness!" cried Kate, stopping and looking up in his face with unaffected amazement; "Mapleton *dull!*"

"Yes, you child," replied George, laughing; "desperately dull sometimes."

"Well, I'm sure *I* never find it so."

"Oh, you are always busy; and when one has something to do, no place is dull, I suppose."

"And if *you* are idle, George, and find Mapleton dull, pray who is to blame?"

"I know what you mean, Miss Wisdom, but I can't help it: when you ask who is to blame, I declare I don't think it is myself."

"Indeed!"

"No; I've never been used to do any thing but what I was forced to do; and, now that I'm too old and too big to be forced, I can't change my nature, and go and seek employment."

"Yes, you could, if you would only set about it, saying to yourself, *I know it's right, and so I'll try.*"

"Well, when I come back, for your sake I *will* try."

"Come back!—are you going away?"

"Yes; I'm going to stay a week at Danesford with some old friends of my poor mother."

"I'm sorry for that;—but then you need not wait till you come back: you always talked of learning fine things from masters at Danesford; so you can begin at once."

"Oh, no, Kate; the masters must come hither by-and-by: this is the gay season at Danesford; balls and parties every night, and the theatre open too!—such fun!"

"Oh, how glad I shall be when you come back and tell me all about it!"

"I wish you could be there with me, Kate; I should enjoy it twice as much."

"Should you indeed! Well, for once, I do wish I could see a play with you! I never was at a play, you know, George."

"When I come back, I promise you you shall see one, Kate."

"And Jane?"

"Yes, yes, to be sure."

"And—and—my father will never go with us, and I don't think we can go with you alone. Oh, I know! Podd must go with us!"

"Podd!" cried George, laughing; "Podd in a private box!"

"Oh, George! poor Podd will look very respectable."

"So she will, Kate; and, did she look the very reverse, she should go nevertheless for your sake. And here she comes to meet us, and scold us for being late at breakfast. Not a word about the play, Kate, till I settle it all with your father.—Well, dame, here we are; and Miss Kate has been giving me a lesson"

"A lesson!" exclaimed Podd, shaking her head.

"A botanical lesson," replied George: "and now for a chase!" and, snatching from the worthy dame a bit of cambric which she had been hemming, he flourished it in the air, running towards the house, and looking back and laughing at her, as, half in sorrow, half in anger, she went *pat-pat* up the gravel-walk in vain pursuit.

The days of asking leave were gone by; no permission was solicited, no refusal dreaded: so George packed up his trunk, ordered it to be sent to Danesford after him, and, mounting his horse, bade a gay adieu to Mr. Leslie and his tranquil family. His friends were gay people, who entered into all the dissipations of the place; their house was naturally attractive to a youth of eighteen, educated as he had been: the fortnight named as the extent of his visit was doubled, and then again another fortnight was devoted to their society; and it was not until after a lapse of six weeks that he returned to Mapleton, tired, haggard, worn-out, and irritable.

Kate was the first person whom he met as he entered the low and humble dwelling; and though he addressed her with pleasure, he looked round with evident disgust.

"I'm delighted to see you, Kate!" said he: "and have you been vegetating here ever since we last met?"

"Where should I be but at my home, George?"

"True; but I protest you are worthy of a better home."

"Don't say that, George,—I should be wrong to let you say that: I can never be more happy."

"That is because you have known no other home."

"So much the better for me, George, if going elsewhere could make me dissatisfied."

"Oh, don't preach! I've had such a visit,—such fun! I wish you had been with us!"

"Do you, George? I doubt *that:* I beg your pardon for saying so, but, had you missed—had you thought of me, or any of us, you would during the last six weeks have come over at least *once* to see us."

"I *sent* over, Kate."

"Yes, once, when you wanted the pointer puppy."

"Well, and of course heard you were all well."

"The man who came for the dog never made any inquiry."

"How do you know?"

"Podd told me so."

"Podd's an old fool!"

"Oh, George, for shame!"

"Don't say 'for shame' to *me*, Miss Leslie!" said the youth, drawing up his fine form in anger.

"I beg your pardon, sir," replied Kate, colouring, and turning towards the house.

"Nay, Kate, don't go,—*I* beg *your* pardon," said George, following and taking her hand.

Kate tried to speak, but could only withdraw it in silence.

"Come, hang it! no nonsense. I did not mean what I said: but I can't bear being found fault with; and I'm not a boy now, you know."

"I shall not again forget it, Mr. Hanson."

"Mr. Hanson! That will never do: call me George now, and always, just as you did long ago; you will break my heart if you don't!" cried George, tears standing in his eyes. "Why, Kate, you were

not wont to be so cross! you are vexed because I've not been near you for six weeks."

"*I*, sir?—no, no!"

"Yes, yes, you are; but I could not help it; the Somervilles always had some engagement for me. But I did not forget you: I often talked of you; so often, indeed, that they used to laugh at me about you."

"About *me!*—Impossible!"

"Yes, and I don't wonder at it, they told me I raved about you; and whenever I came down to breakfast, they asked me if I had been dreaming of my little wife."

"I'll tell my papa if you call me names."

"Pooh! come, be friends; I will have a kiss: a man may kiss his little wife, you know!" and, spite of poor Kate's tears and struggles, George obtained his kiss. Mrs. Podd entered the room at the moment, and Kate, as red as a rose, and sobbing with anger and agitation, ran and hid her face on her shoulder.

"Heyday!" said the housekeeper; "I wonder at you, Mr. Hanson, kissing the girls like that."

"Like that! and pray how would you have me kiss them?"

"I wouldn't have you kiss them at all, sir."

"Why, what do you take me for? Pretty girls like young men to kiss them; you did yourself, old Poddy, when you were young."

"I never was a pretty girl," replied the housekeeper.

"Plain or pretty," said George, "it's all one; girls like to be kissed."

"No they don't," sobbed Kate.

"*You* did, Podd; you know you did," said George,

trying to make the old woman laugh; "though you say you were *not* pretty, and though you were a little lame, *I* know——"

"What do you know, pray?"

"There *was* a young man——"

"A what, sir?"

"A young man—such a nice young man!—Ah, ah! Podd, you can't help laughing; don't you remember how *he* kissed you? just like this!" and George gave the old dame a smack that resounded through the house.

"Well, there's no great harm, Kate, after all," said she, unable to preserve her dignified gravity: "don't cry about a kiss; he has kissed me too."

"But—he—he called me names," sobbed Kate.

"For shame, sir, to call a young lady names!"

"I only called her my little wife; there's no offence in that."

"Oh, dear! if *that* was all, I see no harm. Go away, you foolish little girl, and dry your eyes: Mr. George meant no offence."

And as Kate ran out of the room to hide in her own chamber, the discreet housekeeper added in a low voice to the young man. "Time enough to think of *that*. But whenever you do look out for a wife, take my word for it, you could not do better."

CHAPTER VIII.

Why didst thou say
I was brighter far
Than the bright ray
Of the evening star?
Why didst thou come
Seeking my home,
Till I believed that thy love was sincere?
Oh, if thy vow,
Wearies thee now,
Though I *may* weep for thee—never come
here.

To any one brought up in habits of idleness, a six weeks' initiation in the second-rate dissipations of a watering place could not prove otherwise than destructive. If people will abandon young men, or rather boys, to the daily lounge of a provincial town, and, when not otherwise engaged at a party or ball, to the nightly filth of a provincial theatre, what can afterwards be expected of them! Will they, when they go back to a Mapleton village, appreciate the enjoyments of rural life?—or at a Mapleton Rectory, can it be supposed that they will relish the homely fare, and diligently attend to the studies, to pursue which was the sole object of their being sent there?

Certain it is, that poor George Hanson, being once thoroughly unsettled, never again so much as affected the semblance of diligence at Mapleton: he was continually absent on short visits to his friends the So-

mervilles; and when he did spend a few days at the Rectory, Kate seemed to be his sole inducement, and by her side he contrived to pass the greatest part of his time.

Kate's existence was no longer all tranquillity: the visits of George Hanson were her sunshine, his absence her clouds. When walking by his side in the valley, and listening to his descriptions of more dazzling scenes, she was happy; and then, when she had heard his gay farewell, and a whispered promise of a speedy return, she would wander away from her sister, to retrace in silent abstraction the path they had so recently trod together, treasuring up in her recollection every word that he had uttered. She had now become accustomed to the "*nickname*" which had at first so startled and offended her; and though to be called his "dear little wife" might call up a blush, she no longer coloured with resentment, nor answered with reproof.

Months had passed away since first in sport he had so addressed her; she knew no more of his engagements or amusements at Danesford than he had chosen to reveal to her; but during the whole of that period she could not be blind to the fact, that when he was at Mapleton, his whole thoughts, and apparently his whole heart, had been engrossed by herself.

To love him and to be loved again, as they had ever loved from infancy, and no more, was still, as she innocently thought, her only wish. For eighteen months his visits to Danesford, and, as he represented, to the Somervilles, had been continued. His home at Mapleton had become merely nominal; and in his nineteenth year, it was not probable that George

Hanson would turn over a new leaf—nor indeed any leaf, of any book whatever.

The selfishness of the spoiled boy still characterised the young man. As long as Kate amused him, he lingered near her, and breathed those honied words of fondness and flattery, heard by her for the first time, and spoken by him—how often! She, the unsophisticated daughter of a country schoolmaster, who never in her life had enjoyed an opportunity of entering what is called "society;" he, the pampered pet of a provincial coterie—handsome and elegant, prematurely taken to parties by his mother, and since her death, courted by every dance-giving dowager in a country town where beaux were scarce;—how could she compete with him; how laugh off as badinage the words that sounded so like devoted love; how comprehend that what he said to her, he often had said to others; how believe that he was but selfishly enjoying the present without one serious thought about the future—without once pausing to consider that his attentions might win her affections, and that when he had won them, desertion or indifference would render her miserable!

It may be said that it was Kate Leslie's duty to tell her father, or at least the old woman who loved her so well, all that had passed between her and young Hanson. But she had nothing to tell: he never "made love," as it is called, "in good set terms," nor in so many words said, "Ma'am, will you marry me?"

Young man as he was, he was too much a man of the world to commit himself by any unguarded expression approximating too much *to the point.* His eyes, his smile, his manner, the tone of his voice,

implied every thing—nay, much more than commonplace plain people could express in words: but when he was gone, and his sentences were recollected, there was nothing which, if repeated, sounded at all like a declaration. Kate had positively nothing to tell. That when he was at Mapleton he was devoted to her, was evident to every body; and as the very few who were concerned about the matter could not but be glad to see a probability that the elder of the two sisters would find a protector and a home before she was deprived of her sole remaining parent, they thought it prudent to take no notice, and hope for the best.

Kate thought not of the future; she had no schemes, nor had she even secretly indulged in any dream of a home shared with her companion. When he was absent, she wished for his return, and would not have concealed from any one that such was her wish; and when he did return, satisfied with her own enjoyment of his presence, she thought only of rendering him happy during the period of his stay.

When he left Mapleton and poor Kate Leslie, it was to seek engagements that engrossed all his time and thoughts. Dress, dinners, dances, wine, beauty, cards, the theatre, the actresses; what hours had *he* for meditation on the fair fond smile of one who, when he was gone, turned sadly to her books, her birds, her flowers,—thinking only of him, treasuring his words in her memory, and his image in her heart!

It would seem strange that Kate was not digusted with the selfishness of a man who, seeking her only when gayer scenes wearied him, left her unpitied in her solitude when his spirits again required excite-

ment. But at her age, woman in proportion to her own guileless innocence is always fond, relying, and unsuspicious. When others blamed him, she was ever ready with an excuse for his conduct. "Had she been a man, she might have been as fond of change; how could she, or how could others tell? then wherefore judge him severely? Besides, of all young men, he had the best excuse for his irregularities,—early habit, and the neglect of his mother: and was it natural he should think Mapleton dull? Two young girls were no fit companions for a spirited, active youth; and were he to sit down moping there for ever, perhaps those who now blamed his dissipation would be the very first to censure him for want of enterprise and energy."

Like all who love so young, she found an excuse for every action of her lover; and when others pointed out his imperfections, she secretly wondered that one so perfect should waste a thought on her!

CHAPTER IX.

Once Folly tried to cheat the world,
  Assuming Wit's demeanour,
And thought (poor fool) the darts *she* hurl'd
  Than Wit's *own* darts were keener!
While those of Wit were used in sport,
  And dipp'd in Pleasure's chalice,
Young Folly used another sort,
  Whose only point was Malice.

A sly and secret aim she took—
  But, ere one heart was wounded,
Upon *herself*, by some ill luck,
  Each venom'd shaft rebounded.
So Wisdom ventured to express
  This gentle hint to guide her:—
When Wit takes aim with most success,
Good-nature stands beside her.

Mr. and Mrs. Somerset Somerville were what are called at watering-places, charming young people, and great acquisitions to the society. He was rich, vulgar, and uneducated, the orphan only child of some City body in some extensive trade. His father had borne the ugly name of Scroggings; but before his death he had been persuaded by his heir-apparent to change it, and diving into by-gone annals of maternal connexions, a family named Somers, living somewhere in Somersetshire, was discovered; and though Somers was better than Scroggings, Somerville sounded better still, and Somerset Somerville best of all. So the money required for such changes

of patronymic was paid down; and very soon afterwards, he who had borne the ugly name was buried in the new family-vault, and the name itself was buried in oblivion.

At two-and-twenty, with health in his face and money in his pocket, there's nobody a man may not marry. So thought Mr. Anthony Somerset Somerville, and from this general rule he scarcely excepted heiresses of crowns and sceptres. With a very high appreciation of his own comely face, he set out in search of a wife.

Pretty young women had no chance whatever with him: he was in pursuit of a lady,—a lady in her own right; connexion was what he wanted; and he bored every master of the ceremonies at every watering-place in turn, to introduce him to scions of noble houses and sprigs of nobility. After fishing for ladies for some months without getting even a nibble, he had the felicity of being presented to the Honourable Miss Silverthorn, thirteenth daughter of the Right Honourable Lord Skinflint. The young lady's purse was most propitiously empty; and his lordship, having made inquiries respecting the gentleman's wealth, was only too happy to make him stiff bows, take wine with him, and then at the altar to give away to him one of his thirteen maids of "*honour*." Mr. Somerset Somerville handed the Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville into a travelling carriage drawn by four grays, and then seated himself by her side, feeling desperately in love, not with the blood that mantled in the cheek of his bride, but with the blood of her ancestors. The Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville was affected, silly, and insipid; she writhed with affectation; she wriggled

as she walked; she squeezed up her little dull eyes, and peered at people through her glass, and thought it knowing and pretty to seem to misunderstand every word that was addressed to her. If she met any body any where whose person was unknown to her, the air with which she looked at the stranger, and inquired who it could be, implied that she suspected her hostess had been guilty of the daring impropriety of asking the Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville to a "*mixture*."

For the individual who had paid his addresses to her she never felt the slightest partiality; but, after slighting and insulting him, she was made acquainted with the very handsome settlements which he had offered to make, and she then coldly listened to his proposals, and as coldly became his wife.

He certainly had in some degree risen in her estimation, because the person who was in the position of husband to one so distinguished as herself shone with a borrowed light, and could not be actually contemptible: but, knowing that the less that was said about his origin and family the better, she never named him when absent, seldom spoke to him when present, and took care to impress upon all her acquaintances that Mr. Somerset Somerville had no one merit to entitle him to toleration in society, beyond that of having been permitted to lead to the hymeneal altar the thirteenth daughter of the Right Honourable Lord Skinflint.

Such were the friends with whom George Hanson was now almost domesticated. Youth and high spirits are sure of being warmly welcomed in a provincial town by those whose study it is to make their houses agreeable. There were no military at Danes-

ford, and no hounds were kept in its immediate neighbourhood. Had there been barracks, and a dozen or two of sporting-men, a mere boy like George would have been suffered to remain at Mapleton; but a Danesford dowager about to give a ball, after making out a long and fair list of dancing ladies, was sure to be sadly puzzled when she commenced a corresponding catalogue of dancing-men. Under such circumstances, the clerks at Messrs. Dibbs's bank, and even those of Mr. Sinlove, the lawyer, were acceptable; the assistant of the apothecary was not considered objectionable; and two or three neighbouring curates, in sables and lavender-coloured gloves, were kept in a state of perpetual motion: the sons of resident gentry, caught in a college vacation, or even at home for the holidays, were put upon the list of *man*kind; and elderly bachelors, no matter how fat, were expected to be frisky.

No wonder, then, that George Hanson, at nineteen, manly for his age, and particularly handsome, should have become at Danesford a person of infinite importance.

Lord Skinflint's family had long ago formed an intimacy with Lord William Hanson. When that nobleman condescended to marry Miss Gubbins, the daughter of an apothecary, his aristocratic friends had set about forgetting his existence as fast as they could. The Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville had (though she was short-sighted when she chose it) a quick eye for beauty, and happening to meet our hero, she was struck with his appearance, and inquired who he was. The grandson of a duke had much merit in her eyes, and she resolved to invite so well-connected a young gentleman to her next

party. She sent George a note, in which she mentioned the intimacy which had existed formerly between her family and his own. He was delighted to avail himself of the invitation; and shortly afterwards, on being pressed to accept a bed at the house, instead of remaining a fortnight, the period at first named, his first visit, as we have seen, extended to six weeks, and was followed up by so many other visits, that at last his little apartment at Mapleton Rectory was very seldom tenanted.

Mrs. Somerville had no idea of the possibility of enjoying home in a quiet way. To make her fireside tolerable, it was necessary to light quantities of wax-candles, make the knocker of her street-door send forth thunder, and fill her three drawing-rooms so full, that standing-room was not to be obtained. She and her husband were certainly not entertaining people in one sense of the word; but in another acceptation of it, no one in Danesford entertained so much. George was always a welcome guest; and when his friends went to parties given by other people, he always accompanied them.

On one occasion, the Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville condescended, after much hesitation, to accept the invitation of a Mrs. Pringle, a lady recently established in the town; and as Mr. Somerville delighted not only in finishing his bottle, but also in occasionally diving deeply into a second, he was left dozing in his dining-room, while his wife and his young guest proceeded to the *soirée*.

The honourable lady, impressed with a deep sense of the honour she was conferring, entered the ball-room with her glass at her eye, and a sort of hesitating, inquiring, examining expression on her coun-

tenance. Her poor hostess, vulgarly enough, stepped forward with profuse thanks for the honour conferred on her.

"Oh, don't mention it, pray," replied Mrs. Somerset Somerville, looking round; "you've really managed wonderfully with these small rooms."

"Pray come out of the draught of the door," said Mrs. Pringle.

"Oh, thank you; if I see any one I know, I will find a seat by her."

"I believe you will find all your friends here."

"Who is *that*, pray?" inquired the guest, staring at a lady whose name she knew perfectly.

"Mrs. Watts: pretty, is she not?"

"Watts?—Oh! Mrs. Watts! I *thought* it must be her, but was not aware she was in society."

"I hope," said Mrs. Pringle, colouring,—"I hope you will find some of your set in that room."

"Oh, I shall do very well," said Mrs. Somerville; and, peering through her glass, she proceeded, and seemed to sniff at every body who passed her.

George, already thoroughly selfish, acquired from his companion the habit of turning into ridicule the failings and weak points of all who passed before him, and also that apathetic disregard of their feelings without which such a propensity cannot be indulged.

"Really, Mr. Hanson," said Mrs. Somerville in a tone of voice intentionally loud enough to be distinctly heard by a group of Danesford residents who thoroughly enjoyed themselves,—"really, I cannot vegetate at this dull place much longer."

"Dull!" replied George; "you have never allowed *me* to think it so."

"Oh, you have never yet enjoyed a London season."

"I am sure I shall never come into Danesford when you and Mr. Somervile are gone."

"You must come and see us in town."

"I should be delighted," replied George, who never yet had ventured to think of deliberately leaving Mapleton for any length of time; "but——"

"But what?"

"Why you will laugh at me I know; but I have always considered Mapleton my home, and Mr. Leslie my guardian, and——"

"And Miss Leslie your little wife."

"Oh, you are jesting! I should be most happy to leave Mapleton in the spring to enjoy your society in London; but the fact is, I think Mr. Leslie will object."

"Object! are you to be a schoolboy for ever?"

"Nay; surely Mr. Leslie does not exert much of a schoolmaster's authority, even now that I am nominally with him."

"Certainly not: and very proper that he should not. At your age, the more you see of society the better."

Mrs. Pringle at this moment politely walked up to Mrs. Somerville.

"Will not your young friend dance?" said she.

"Dance, ma'am!" exclaimed Mrs. Somerville, looking through her eye-glass.

"I should be so happy to introduce him to Miss Trotter!"

"Miss Trotter?"

"Yes; a sweet girl."

"Sir Mandeville Trotter's daughter?" inquired

Mrs. Somerville, knowing perfectly well Sir Mandeville and his family were a hundred miles off.

"Oh dear, no; the Trotters, you know——"

"Ah!" exclaimed Mrs. Somerville, affecting to recollect herself, "the medical gentleman: thank you,—no. Should you venture on giving us a waltz by-and-by, Mr. Hanson will take a turn with me."

The hostess, thoroughly mortified, withdrew; and Mrs. Somerville and her companion having done their utmost to make her dissatisfied with her party, rose and waltzed together only just long enough to make "the attempt and not the deed confound" Mrs. Pringle, who could not avoid hearing Mrs. Somerville declare it was impossible to waltz in so small a room, and to such execrable music.

CHAPTER X.

I want to go upon the stage
  And wear a wig and feathers;
I envy each tragedian
  The laurels that he gathers.

In tragic moods I push my wig
  High up upon my forehead;
I cork my eyebrows, and assume
  A look that's very horrid.

Genteelly comic I can be,
  And farcically sprightly;
I'm excellent in pantomime,
  In ballet parts dance lightly.

PRIVATE theatricals at Danesford! what an attractive announcement! How delightful for the amateurs themselves to dress up and paint their faces, and walk about, and talk loud! And for the audience, how interesting to see Mr. Somerville, a real gentleman, with pockets full of money, do that badly for nothing at all which they had all seen Mr. Middleton, of the theatre, do admirably well, earning his bread at a salary of thirty shillings a week! Then the supercilious Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville was actually going to undertake a part; and to see her talking without peering through her glass, would at least be a novelty. "The Rivals" was the unfortunate comedy selected for misrepresentation; Mrs. Somerville's best drawing-room was rendered

thoroughly uninhabitable, carpets up, stage erected, drops here, wings there, stage-lamps, green curtain, and place for fiddlers.

The casting of the characters is always a serious undertaking; but Mrs. Somerset Somerville was on all ordinary occasions so despotic, that nobody thought of resisting her decrees on this important one.

George Hanson was almost beside himself with joy, for he was to be Captain Absolute; and to strut his hour in regimentals was the height of his ambition. A fat, vulgar old man was selected for Sir Anthony Absolute, more like Daniel Dowlas, "a lord's warming-pan," than a baronet or private gentleman. Sir Lucius was a young Englishman, who was to do the brogue as best he could. Falkland was an aristocratic cousin to the lady-manager, who lisped, and pronounced his words fine, and walked about like a doll on wires. Mr. Somerville was to be Acres, without humour, or even memory to retain the words of his part. He had no one requisite for the character, except his innate vulgarity;—and vulgarity won't quite make an Acres.

In all the little world of Danesford no real lady could be found who would take a part, with the exception of the lady of the mansion, who had undertaken Julia.

"What is to be done?" said George, thinking of his uniform, which had been tried on, and fitted admirably.

"We must give it up!" replied Mrs. Somerville: "really there's no use in trying to set things going in such a place as this!"

"And there have I been and learnt seven pages and a half of Bob Acres!" said her husband.

"There is but one way!" she exclaimed.

"What is that?" inquired George, brightening up.

"Your friends at Mapleton."

"Well?"

"You must invite them for me, and get them to take the parts."

"What parts?"

"Mrs. Malaprop."

"What! old Mrs. Podd?"

"I don't know who you mean by old Mrs. Podd; but there are two sisters, are there not?—two Miss Leslies?"

"Yes,—Kate and Jane."

"Well, they will only be too glad to get here on any terms. Invite them for me: stipulating,—that one is to play Mrs. Malaprop, and the other Lydia Languish."

George's hopes sank again.

"My dear madam, they would not do it,—they could not: and had they the will and the power, their father never would allow it."

"Well, then, there is an end of the plan."

"Then," said Mr. Somerville, "we'll have the house put to rights again. I'll give up learning my lesson; and we'll give a ball, and a good blow-out afterwards, instead of all this mummery."

"I think it might be managed, after all," added George in a hesitating tone, as if uncertain how his proposal would be received.

"Tell me how?" said the lady.

"Why, I've heard that in private theatricals the parts of elderly women are often played by men."

"Oh yes; and even heroines are sometimes attempted by beardless cornets, or collegians, or midshipmen, in country quarters, remote places, or on board ship."

"Oh dear, yeth!" said Mr. Skinflint, the embryo Falkland; "you know I'm uthed to the thort of thing; and I can pothitively affirm that I have acted Marlow and Dick Dowlath with a *he* Mith Hardcathle and Thithely Homethpun."

"Well, George, and is Mr. Sinlove, the lawyer, to represent Lydia Languish?"

"No, no, not quite that; but old Middleton, the comic actor at the playhouse——"

"Lydia Languish?"

"How can you be so provoking! No—to be sure not,—but Mrs. Malaprop."

"Upon my word, not a bad idea! I see no objection to that; and we can make the man our stage-manager."

"Well, then," cried George, with a faint hope that, after all, the regimentals might be worn, "there is no difficulty now but Lydia."

"And that is the worst," replied the already weary *student* of Bob Acres. "No man can play Lydia Languish; so we must give it up."

"I have an idea!" interrupted Mr. Skinflint.

"What is it?" inquired his fair cousin incredulously.

"That man Middleton——"

"What, Lydia Languish!"

"No, no; you have thet him down for Mitheth Malaprop. But I've heard he has a daughter."

"A regular actress from the Danesford theatre? Oh, impossible!"

"You are tho prethipitate; the ith not an actreth."

"No;" said George, "it is quite true. Middleton is to have a benefit by-and-by; and somebody said that his daughter, a girl of sixteen, was to make her first appearance on that occasion."

"Oh! she has *never* been before the public?"

"Never."

"That alters the case; and of course he will be delighted to bring her forward under our auspices. George, write him a note, and offer him fifty pounds for the services of himself and daughter."

"Fifty pounds!" exclaimed Mr. Somerville; "fifty pounds is really a large sum."

"Fifty guineas for their performance on that night," continued his honourable lady, going on as if he had not spoken, without even deigning to turn her eyes towards him.

"I will write with pleasure," replied George; adding inquiringly, "Fifty pounds, I think you said?"

"Guineas," replied the lady; and George went off to make the arrangement.

The poor provincial actor gladly entered into the proposed engagement; and at the first rehearsal he joined the aristocratic party, and presented to them as the representative of Lydia Languish, his only child Mary.

George thought he had never (*but once*) seen so fresh, so fair, so interesting a creature. She stood before them on their little elevated stage, not only, like themselves, a novice in the art of acting;—she was doubly a novice: she found herself among strangers, all of whom were her superiors in rank

and station, and she could have sat down and cried, overcome by anxiety and alarm.

She was one of those gentle girls who come forth pure, guileless, and uncontaminated from a sphere to which we are apt to impute general corruption. Her only parent, a veteran actor, who, though possessed of very considerable ability, had never had the good fortune to obtain a metropolitan engagement, had been deprived of his young wife when Mary was an infant. He was one of those men whose character and conduct do honour to a profession which is too often stigmatised and condemned on account of the disreputable eccentricities of some of its less worthy members: but it should not be forgotten that in this, as in other walks of life, respectability goes quietly on its way unnoticed, while reckless infamy acquires notoriety. Poor Mr. Middleton had toiled willingly for fifteen years for the support and education of his pretty child; and now that he saw her fast ripening into womanhood, and possessed of extraordinary beauty, he trembled when he reflected that he had no alternative but to launch her on an ocean beset with countless shoals, storms, and quicksands, but through which some few admirable women have safely steered, and reached a haven and a home, where honour and tranquillity have awaited them, with a pure and spotless reputation, only rendered the more triumphant by the dangers they have overcome.

Who could behold Mary's modest countenance and fragile form, and endure the idea that, painted and decked in tinsel robes, she must become the flattered, favourite actress, or, slighted and unsuccessful, encounter disapprobation and contempt!

George Hanson, though he never could plod through a task, or learn by heart a lesson that was given to him, had an apt memory for all matters that pleased his own fancy, and at the first rehearsal Captain Absolute required no prompter. Lydia Languish was equally perfect; and while all the other performers, with the exception of Mrs. Malaprop, were stammering, hesitating, and peeping into their books, this pair of lovers went glibly through their parts, and acted with spirit and effect.

Daily and nightly were these rehearsals repeated. When not engaged in the business of the scene, George was always at Mary's elbow; or rather, perhaps, we ought to say that Captain Absolute kept up his character, and continued his flirtation with Miss Languish. The timid girl, thrown so suddenly among strangers, felt cheered by his kindness, and grateful for his attention; and before the arrival of the night of performance, the representative of the Captain became as interesting to her as the Captain is supposed to be to the lady she represented.

During this busy month George never went to Mapleton. He, however, so far remembered the existence of its inmates as to prevail upon Mrs. Somerset Somerville to invite the family to her entertainment. After much deliberation, the two girls, principally through the ever-ready intercession of Mrs. Podd, obtained permission to go; and a chaperon having been found, every obstacle was removed, and Mrs. Marlow and the Miss Leslies were announced by Mrs. Somerville's powdered footmen, and having arrived early, (as guests from the country invariably do,) they obtained very excellent places, and had an

opportunity of overlooking the proceedings of the people who lighted the lamps.

At length the theatre filled, the music played, the curtain rose, and George Hanson, most becomingly dressed, and looking handsomer than ever, appeared upon the stage. Poor Kate had not seen him for a whole month; and now that every other person welcomed him with applause or with smiles, she sat, she knew not why, silent, sad, in tears! No one noticed her, no one thought of her—not even Jane, whose exclamations were full of natural delight and wonder. Unobserved, she wiped away her tears, tried to attribute them to the novelty of the scene and over-excitement, and resolved to be amused as others were. But no! all passed before her like a dream, indistinct and painful. A lovely girl stood at George's side: she heard words of endearment; but his looks, and the tone of his voice, conveyed to her accustomed ear a fonder, deeper meaning than the words. But it was a play;—he was acting, merely reciting sentences written down for him, and giving them appropriate action and intonation. It was all *make believe:*—was it so? She knew him well, and she thought *not!*

When George and his fair companion left the stage, Kate became abstracted, insensible: others laughed and applauded, but she heard not the applause, nor its cause; but the moment he or Mary appeared, she started almost with an exclamation of pain, and riveted her eyes upon the stage.

The drama came to a conclusion, the curtain fell, and Kate, worn out with her long struggle against emotions unaccountable to herself, hurried Jane away, and threw herself back in the hired carriage which was to take them back to Mapleton. The

younger sister, fascinated with the novelty of the scene, talked rapidly in praise of all the performers, but particularly of George Hanson and the lovely Lydia Languish: but, in the midst of her eulogies, she was startled by a low hysteric sob, and turning anxiously to Kate, she found that she had fainted.

CHAPTER XI.

Oh, leave me to my sorrow,
  For my heart is oppress'd to-day;
Oh, leave me, and to-morrow
  Dark shadows may pass away.
There's a time when all that grieves us
  Is felt with a deeper gloom;
There's a time when hope deceives us,
  And we dream of bright days to come.

"WELL, dear, and what said Master George last night?" inquired Mrs. Podd, as she sat on Kate's bedside the morning after the play, holding her feverish hand, and trying to peep at her pale face, which she seemed determined to conceal as much as possible with the bed-clothes.

"Nothing."

"Nothing! pooh!—what excuse did he make for not coming home all this time?"

"None."

"Are you hoarse, my dear?"

"No; only tired. Leave me, and I'll get up."

"If you are tired, you had better stay where you are. But tell me about Master George."

"I have nothing to tell; that is—except—"

"Ay, come, now for it!—except what?"

"Oh, about his acting. But Jane will tell you all that better than I, for I was unwell."

"Did he ask for *me*?" inquired the persevering old woman.

"No; he was not with us."

"What! did he not come round among the lookers-on?"

"Yes—once or twice; but he did not seem to see us."

"But if he had looked about, I suppose he could have found you?"

"I suppose so," faintly answered Kate.

"Oh!"

There was a pause. Mrs. Podd descended from the side of the bed, and took two or three hasty turns up and down the little room. Kate's face was turned towards the pillow, but she could hear the *pat-pat* noise of her high shoe.

"I wish that boy had never come to this house!" said she, again perching herself on the quilt. Kate's heart would not allow her to second the wish, and she was silent.

"Oh dear! oh dear! I see how it is, and I have foreseen it all along!—you love him, as well you might: and what will become of us if he don't love you!"

Kate in an instant sat erect in her bed; and seizing both Mrs. Podd's hands in her own, she pressed them, and looking earnestly in her face, said, in an unnatural hissing whisper,

"Hush, for God's sake! You—you cannot mean what you say, and 'tis not a theme for jest."

"Jest! my poor lamb! Oh! when I see him again—"

"Oh, dear nurse, don't frighten me so! don't let me dread your indiscretion. You do not—you cannot mean to say that you will speak to him on such a subject!"

"No, no,—I am an old fool, and don't much know the ways of the world; but I'm not so bad as that. What is to be done?"

"Done!—nothing," replied Kate, trying to smile, and sinking back on her pillow.

"Nothing! and your happiness is to be sacrificed, and you are to suffer in secret, and all for a boy's selfishness!"

"Dear nurse, you mistake: I—I *may* have been hurt at—at a friend's neglect; but when you impute love, you—"

"I am *not* mistaken, Kate,—old as I am, diminutive, and lame. My face, as they told me, did not want attraction once; and when I looked in the glass, I saw bright eyes and a white skin, and thought not of the deformity that was not there reflected! I forgot my lameness, and I loved! ha, ha!—*I*, with my high shoe and my crooked back;—why don't you laugh, Kate?—every body laughed when they heard it;" and the old woman passed her hand hastily over her eyes.

"Dear nurse," cried Kate, "you know we love you."

"Yes, yes; and what I'm talking of is the bygone folly of fifteen, nobody knows how many years ago. But since then, as I've never been wooed, I've had leisure and a keen eye to watch the wooings of others; and after all I've seen, I'd call a curse upon that boy if he forsakes you!"

"Oh, nurse, for shame!—you are wrong, very wrong, to say this."

"Who gave you that ring? You need not answer; I know it was his gift."

Kate made no reply.

"Tell me," said Mrs. Podd, "as he was inattentive to you last night, to whom was he attentive?"

"To no one in particular,—that is—except on the stage."

"Well?"

"A young actress, I believe."

"Do you mean to say that he seemed *really* interested about her?"

"I do."

"Oh, if that is all, it must have been only what the play-book taught him to say; and I've good news:—those friends of his with the two long names are going to London in a few days, and then he will come back here, and get into his old habits, and love us all better than ever."

Kate shook her head. "Does my father know I was ill last night?" she said.

"Oh, deary-me, no; he thinks you are fatigued, and hopes you will never go out again."

"I almost hope I never shall!" replied Kate; and, to end a discussion which had given her infinite pain, not only by opening her eyes to her own feelings, but by proving also that one person at least had detected them, she made preparations for rising; and kind Mrs. Podd, kissing her affectionately, bade her hope for the best, and then went *pat-pat* down stairs to provide dinner for the little boys.

Young ladies who, having regularly "*come out*" into the world, know a little of the ways of the worldly, will think that Kate was a silly girl for allowing her heart to be so entirely engrossed by one who had never uttered more than the general language of admiration, without coming to the important question. But it must be remembered, that

our heroine had never been to a party in her life; and, living out of the world, she had no mother to tell her of its usages, and to warn her of the peril of the woman who, guileless and affectionate herself, listens to an artful and cold-hearted young man, whose flattering phrases, so new to her, have been learned, and already oft repeated, in a gay sphere of which she knows nothing.

Had not Kate been motherless, so unrestricted an intimacy between her and her father's pupil, young as they were, probably would not have been permitted. They had been playfellows as boy and girl, until, imperceptibly to themselves, time had brought to him the graces and maturity of manhood, and to her the stature and the beauty of a woman. As imperceptibly, too, had the thoughtless joyousness of childhood passed from her: the veil had fallen from her eyes, and with shame she acknowledged to herself that she loved!

Once aware of an error, Kate's well-regulated mind instantly resolved resolutely to amend it. Some days would probably elapse before George's return to Mapleton: during his absence, she determined on the line of conduct it would be most prudent to pursue: when he did arrive, no word or look, she thought, should betray her past folly, and, for the future, the very consciousness of her indiscretion would preserve her from its indulgence.

CHAPTER XII.

'Twill remind you of me, though the token
  Be neither of silver nor gold;
'Twill remind you of words you have spoken,
  How fond—must now never be told:
Of the days when I thought your affection,
  Like mine, everlasting would be.
Yes—though you may fly from reflection,
  That still will remind you of me!

'Twill remind you of me though you shun it
  And throw it aside with disdain;
You will one day look sadly upon it,
  And sigh for your first love again:
That gift will be seen among many,
  And *mine* the least costly may be—
And yet perchance dearer than any,
  Because 'twill remind you of me!

Had Kate Leslie been a little less deeply interested about one of the principal actors, she might have derived some amusement from the performance of "The Rivals" at the residence of Mrs. Somerset Somerville. The amusement was certainly not such as Sheridan's excellent comedy usually conveys: in fact, though "The Rivals" had been *promised* in the play-bill, something very unlike it was *performed*.

Fortunately, Captain Absolute, Lydia Languish, and Mrs. Malaprop are frequently thrown together in the scene; and these parts being adequately filled, there was now and then some genuine applause; and occasionally laughter was excited by the

wit of the comedy, and not by the absurd incapacity of the actors.

But Acres and Sir Lucius O'Trigger were worse than nonentities; and their omissions, and mistakes, and the silly way in which they uttered the little which they did remember, caused more fatigue than mirth in the spectators.

But Falkland and Julia were admirable in their way. Mr. Somerset Somerville acted on her stage just as she was accustomed to walk and talk in her drawing-room: she spoke to her lover with the same supercilious drawl, and for the life of her she could not help sometimes squeezing up her eyes and looking through her glass in the middle of a fine speech.

Falkland, in an embroidered waistcoat, and chains, and brooches, and a curled wig, was Mr. Skinflint, and nobody else in the world, and his recitation of the part defies description. After his first scene with Julia, there was a shout of laughter and three rounds of applause. To quote his speech will convey to the reader but a faint idea of his merit:

"The's not coming, nor don't intend it, I thuppoth. Thith ith not theadineth, but obthinathy!—Yet I detherve it. What! after tho long an abthenth to quarrel with her tenderneth!—'twath barbarouth, and unmanly; I thould be athamed to thee her now. I'll wait till her juth rethentment ith abated; and when I dithtreth her tho again, may I loth her for ever!"

Mrs. Somerset Somerville was no fool, and she was perfectly aware, that while applause was bestowed upon some of the performers, she had rendered herself ridiculous, and that her husband had been a mere buffoon. She attributed her own failure to

the lisp of her cousin Skinflint; and dissatisfied with George Hanson, partly on account of his success, but particularly because he had been attentive to the timid Mary Middleton, the bright star of the evening, she shut herself up in her chamber for several days, and only left it to go forth and distribute farewell cards through the town.

Among the departures in the Danesford Herald for the following week appeared, "Mr. and the Honourable Mrs. Somerset Somerville, for their mansion in Belgrave Square; and the "mansion" having been secured for the season, they were on their way to the metropolis.

Kate Leslie saw the paragraph, and expected the immediate return of George, without knowing whether to wish for, or to dread his presence. She arranged his apartment as she had often done before, and she gathered fresh flowers and placed them on his table, because he had always been accustomed to find a bouquet there, and as he had done nothing to warrant her withholding so trifling an attention, her omitting it would excite surprise. But he came not! a whole week passed away, and still no message arrived, no excuse for his protracted delay.

"Where are you going?" said Kate to Mrs. Podd one day, seeing her arrayed in bonnet and cloak as if for church on a Sunday.

"I'm going to Danesford, my dear," she replied, in a tone of voice which betokened ill-humour, and with a rapid *pat-pat* about the room, indicative of disquietude of mind.

"To Danesford, nurse!—you! Why, what *can* have happened to take you to Danesford?"

"Oh, my dear," said the old lady, "many things

may occur to take people to Danesford who have as little business as myself;—ay, and to keep them too:" and she untied the strings of her cloak, merely that her fingers might give vent to her indignation by fastening it again with violence.

"What is the matter?" inquired Kate seriously: "you are angry—with whom?"

"You need not ask with whom."

"Nurse, if you love me——"

"*If* I love you!"

"You do love me, I doubt it not; but do not rashly do that which ought rather to be the act of an enemy. Do not degrade me!"

"Well!" exclaimed Mrs. Podd, *pat-patting* up and down the room with vehemence; "it is very odd I may not go to Danesford about my own private business without being catechised and having my feelings hurt!"

"You cannot mean what you say!" replied Kate reproachfully.

"I *do* mean that I don't like to be stopped and questioned."

"Well, then, nurse I beg your pardon."

"Don't look angry."

"I am not angry."

"But don't feel hurt and annoyed," said the old woman, sidling up to Kate: "what I do is for the best, for I cannot bear to see you look so sad."

"Your going to Danesford, then, *does* concern me?"

"I must *just* go and see what keeps *him* there."

"Oh! nurse, you will betray—you will degrade me."

"No, no, he shall not see me; or if he does, I will

not mention your name; or if he do, I will not let him see that we care about him."

"Oh! promise me that, and—and I should like to—yet why—*why* should I think more of him?"

"Because you can't help it, my dear; and that's always the way with us women."

"I rely on your discretion, nurse," said Kate; and Mrs. Podd, having kissed her cheek, took a basket under her left arm, and, with her crutch-stick in her right hand, off she went to Danesford, *pat-pat* along the gravel walk, faster than many people would have gone whose two legs were of equal measurement.

Mrs. Podd's discretion might well be trusted; she was not one to betray the weaknesses of her sex: but let her actions and words elucidate her character.

She called at the house lately occupied by the Somervilles, and was informed that Mr. Hanson had taken apartments in the High-street. Thither she then proceeded; and finding the young man at home, she was, after some delay, shown up into his sitting-room.

"Ah! Mrs. Podd," cried he, "I'm charmed to see you!"

A low courtesy was her sole reply.

"How are all at Mapleton?"

"I'm very well, thank you, sir," said she, with another obeisance.

"I see you are. Will you take a glass of wine after your walk?—and pray sit down."

"Thank you kindly," replied Mrs. Podd, taking possession of an easy-chair, putting down her basket, and untying her cloak, as if she intended to spend the evening.

"Well, you have not yet told me how you left all at home."

"Oh!" cried Podd, looking up, opening her eyes wide, and leaning back in the chair, "of course you've heard——"

"Heard what?" exclaimed her young host with evident interest.

"What a world of change this is!" she replied, wiping her eyes with her apron.

"What *is* the matter?"

"High and low, rich and poor, the prince and the peasant, and the brute creation; it's the common lot,—the grave! the grave!"

"Good God!" exclaimed George, "what *has* occurred?—not old Mr. Leslie?"

"Oh, he's well enough. Death strikes the young as often as the old: and *so* young, too!"

"For mercy's sake, old woman, say at once what you allude to!" and George filled a bumper of wine, and having drunk it, leaned against the mantel-piece as pale as ashes.

"He *does* care for her," *thought* Mrs. Podd.

"You do not speak," he cried.

"You're the same kind creature you ever were!" she exclaimed.

"Do not keep me longer in suspense."

"You remember my cat?"

"Yes, yes."

"My tortoise-shell cat?"

"What has *he* to do with it?"

"It was a female: indeed I never saw a tortoise-shell tom."

"Good heavens! are you mad, to talk such stuff?"

"My poor cat's dead!" exclaimed Mrs. Podd,

chuckling to herself at the agitation she had excited; and George, having drunk another glass of wine, wiped his forehead with his handkerchief, walked to the window, threw up the sash, and leaned forward to breathe the fresh air.

"We shall soon have him back again," *thought* the old woman. "Here's a present for you, sir," she *said*.

"A present!" he exclaimed, turning round.

"Yes; a beautiful one, too;" and she took from her basket a little roasting-pig.

"A'n't it like a baby?" she added, placing it on the table.

"Delicious, I've no doubt," replied the young man, recovering himself. "To whom am I indebted for this?"

"To me, to be sure: it's well for you one person at Mapleton remembers you."

"*Only* one?"

"Only myself, that *I* know of. Old Leslie, indeed——"

"Oh, nonsense! never mind him."

"Well, Mr. Ibbotson——"

"Pshaw! the girls, Kate?"

"Oh! young things *will* be young things, you know; and Kate and Jane are always so merry, that——"

"They have no time to miss *me?*"

"No time, I hope, to miss *any one* who proves by his actions that he don't deserve to be remembered;" and the old lady, in that sort of flurry which people get into after saying an angry sentence, rose, and tied her cloak, and took up her empty basket.

"Not *deserve* to be remembered!" said George.

"No; surely Mr. Leslie's kindness, weak as he is, poor man! merited gratitude from you. The girls, indeed,—and Kate in particular,—always stop me when I say this."

"Ah! does she?"

"Yes; she says, that she wonders at my thinking it worth while to mention it seriously,—in fact, that I was making much ado about nothing."

George coloured and bit his lips.

"I'm *sure* he cares for her," *thought* Mrs. Podd.

"Hadn't I better send you the rest of your linen?" she said; "for I suppose you're not coming back soon."

"I ought to return—yes, I *will* return,—the end of next week. I would come at once, but I have promised to patronise a benefit at the theatre. You know I am become quite an actor; I suppose Kate told you?"

"Told me what?"

"She saw me act at Mrs. Somerville's."

"Did she? Oh, she never mentioned it."

"Indeed!" exclaimed George, evidently mortified. "Well, I shall see her next week. And, by-the-by, here are tickets for the theatre on the night of the benefit I have mentioned; there will be a splendid house: I have promised to play,—I act Romeo."

"On the public stage?"

"Yes:—you are going without the tickets."

"I will take them," replied Mrs. Podd with a toss of her head; "but no one from Mapleton will come so far to see you make a fool of yourself:" and before he could reply, the old woman's high shoe was heard *pat-pat* down his staircase, and the street-door closed with a tremendous bang.

In spite of all his faults, George was at this moment to be pitied. The voice of his old friend had suddenly called up a host of old associations, and affections long trampled on and insulted swelled at his young heart until tears testified their existence. For one so inexperienced we may be permitted to feel, even while we acknowledge that his sufferings have been the result of his own folly. We are not going to draw the picture of mature depravity, and at the same time to attempt to interest the feelings and affections of the reader for one so unworthy by clothing his vices in a captivating garb of beauty and generosity: but over the errors of youth not yet twenty, the sternest moralist may pause with deep commiseration, and with a fervent prayer for his amendment. Great as had been his selfish disregard of his earliest companions, and his ingratitude to the old man whose house had been to him a home, the neglect of his parent, the incapacity of his preceptor, and the fascination of dissipated worldly associates, offer some palliation for his conduct; and were the better feelings of his nature re-awakened, were he under the influence of some pure being whom he loved and respected, she might yet lead him to a safer and a happier path, teaching him to share with her, in temptation the safe-guard, in sorrow the consolation, and in joy the thankfulness of RELIGION.

When George heard the street-door violently close, he paced his chamber, bitterly repenting his unkind neglect of Kate. 'Tis true he had broken no vow; but he felt acutely his own cowardice in having implied every sentiment of love by his manner, yet without giving utterance to love's name, or breathing one honest intelligible sentence which could be quoted

in evidence against the man whose unsolicited devotion was suddenly withdrawn, and followed by heartless desertion.

But there was another, younger than poor Kate Leslie, and not less fair, with whom George had been less on his guard; and now that the virtues of his first love rose before him, with many a sweet recollection of happy hours gone by, he cursed his folly, and threw himself on his sofa in despair.

Mr. Middleton, the low comedian of the Danesford theatre, was too keenly sensible of the delicacy of his lovely daughter's position to permit a handsome young man of George's station in society to pay her marked attention, and visit at his humble lodgings, without keeping strict watch. Greatly to his mortification, the gay Lothario was often refused admission; a whispered assignation was disregarded, and a note returned unopened. What might have proved a mere boyish fancy was thus strengthened by opposition: his self-love was piqued; and to obtain the sanction of the father, and the presence of Mary herself, he was led into the utterance of promises and protestations, which, now that his old and deeply-rooted attachment for Kate was roused, pressed heavily upon his conscience.

"What have I done!" cried George, suddenly starting up. "Kate! dear Kate—dearer to me than all the world! how basely have I used thee!—And this poor gentle girl—this actress! to her I have uttered vows that must never be fulfilled; for, with all her fascination, I feel not for her the love that I have felt for thee! To both I have been a traitor,—a heartless, selfish, mean, ungrateful traitor! Oh! why was I born,—or why by folly and neglect rendered

so regardless of the feelings of others, so careless of my own happiness!"

Again he paced his room for many minutes, silent and abstracted; and then he paused and opened a desk, from which he took some papers. The first he opened contained a long ringlet of Kate's brown hair; and from the next he showered upon the table the withered remains of flowers, gathered in the sunshine of a summer whose brightness he had shared with Kate, when they were both two years younger.

Tears fell from his eyes, and, clasping his hands, he cried, "Kate, I feel thou art my better angel! I know my own unworthiness,—I dread the unchecked passions that possess me; my only chance of safety, of respectability, lies in thy love and guardianship! Without thee I shall forget every good thought; but with thee I shall pray again, as we have often prayed side by side in the old room at the Rectory,—and prayer will preserve me from sin."

He pressed the faded flowers to his lips, and yielding to his present emotion, (and his feelings were always violent,) he leaned his arms upon the table, buried his face in his hands, and wept like a child.

Hours passed away ere George Hanson roused himself; and when he did so, he found that the daylight was gone, and the only dim light that stole into his chamber came from a lamp in the street opposite to his window.

"Ha!" he cried, starting up, "I am expected—I will go at once. Now or never I must end this intimacy.—Yes, I'll see her for the last time."

Again he deposited in his desk the simple remembrances of Kate Leslie, and, seizing his hat, went forth to gaze once more on the beautiful face of Mary Middleton.

CHAPTER XIII.

Go woo some high-born lady,—
  The world will bless your choice:
Alas! too long already
  I've listened to your voice.
Though bitter tears are blended
  With all you hear me say,
Think not they are intended
  As lures to make you stay.

In a small but neat apartment, situated in an inferior street near the theatre, sat the old actor with his only child. The candles were not lighted, but the little fire blazed up and illuminated the room. Mr. Middleton sat in his arm-chair; and at his feet, on a low stool, was Mary, her white hands clasped and resting on his knee, and her eyes raised to his face, as she listened to him.

"It is an arduous life, dear child," said he.

"I know it, father," she replied; "but there is a double pleasure in overcoming its difficulties."

"So few attain eminence!" he added, mournfully shaking his head.

"Few indeed; but, without brilliant success, enough may be earned to secure independence."

"I am an evidence of that. But I grow old; and learning new parts, which was once an amusement to me, now grows irksome."

"Then it is time for you to rest, and for me to work.—Do not shake your head. Do you doubt that

it will be a pleasure to me to exert every energy for one who has so long laboured for me?"

"No, dear girl, I doubt it not," said the old man, kissing her forehead; "but the effort is not the same. A man having conquered his timidity, if he have talent, must succeed; but a woman's delicacy naturally shrinks from the publicity of such a career."

"No, father, you are mistaken; the motive purifies the deed: and were I now stepping forth upon the stage in that costume which I most dread,—a Viola—a Rosalind,—I think that I could resolutely raise my head and fix my eyes unshrinking on the purest and the proudest; for my heart would whisper, 'I do this for my dear father!'"

Again the old man kissed her, and said, "I sometimes have hoped the effort would be unnecessary."

"Unnecessary! What can you mean?"

"In one word, Mary, what think you of Mr. Hanson?"

"What do I think?"

"Yes,—tell me candidly. To escape from your profession, I would not for the world have you marry a rich man whom you could not love. But Mr. Hanson is, I believe, independent; and could I but see you happy in retirement with one who would be kind to you when I am dead, I should indeed rejoice."

"Alas! I expect no such good fortune."

"He has spoken to you of honourable love; you have confessed it: otherwise, my doors would have been closed against him."

"I am a simple girl, unused to the flattery of young men like Mr. Hanson, and may have misinterpreted his intentions."

"Either his intentions are honourable, Mary, or

he is a villain:—have you any cause to doubt him?"

"No, no, none;—he has been all kindness; too kind, indeed. Hark! that is his knock!" and she started up to light the candles.

"It is time that we should understand him, Mary: I will watch him narrowly."

"Not with suspicion, father; for suspicion finds evil in words and looks which was never intended."

"You love him, Mary."

"Hush! he is on the stairs:—'twas but an inconsiderate word of mine that raised this doubt in your mind; forget it. When I spoke, I thought—perhaps—he would not come to-night; but he is here, you see,—so think no more about it." And she turned to welcome George, who, pale and agitated, now entered the room.

"You are ill, Mr. Hanson!" exclaimed Mary.

"I shall be better soon," he replied; "it is nothing—I am tired, exhausted."

"Oh, you do look very ill!" said the lovely girl, approaching him, and looking in his face as she spoke with a trembling anxiety that startled both her father and the object of her solicitude.

The old man stood with folded arms, and with his eyes intently fixed on Hanson's countenance. When Mary had spoken, the young man glanced towards her father; and, reading in the expression of his features the suspicions that possessed him, and his anxiety for his child, conscience-struck, he withdrew his eyes, and colouring like a detected boy, he leaned back in his chair, passing his handkerchief over his forehead to hide his confusion.

"What can we offer Mr. Hanson, father?" cried the girl.

"I have no wine to give you, sir," said the old man coldly; "and probably you are unused to spirits."

"Thank you; give me any thing," replied George, really overcome by anxiety and emotion.

"Yes, yes," cried Mary, putting a kettle on the fire, and producing from a closet a bottle, tumbler, and tea-spoon, and a wine-glass; "the water will soon boil, and I will mix it for you."

But George poured out a bumper of brandy and drank it off.

"Has any unforeseen event occurred to distress you?" inquired the actor.

"No,—yes—something that I ought not to have heeded; but there *are* moments, you know, when trifles overpower us."

"The old know it well, sir,—especially those who have to contend with life's storms, and who dread the grave only because they must leave behind them some loved being who looks to them for protection."

He spoke with energy, and George made no reply.

"Can you not imagine such anxiety? You need not go far for an example; look at me."

Mary, who was engaged in preparing the refreshment she had promised George, looked anxiously around.

"Nay, dear father, Mr. Hanson is ill and depressed already; choose some more cheerful theme."

"It was Mr. Hanson's presence, Mary, that suggested this sad theme to me."

Mary resumed her occupation; and George, trying to laugh, said,—"I'm sure I regret having brought blue devils with me, then."

"I would always have those who profess to be my friends come to me openly and frankly, as they really are, without a mask. If they are happy, their happiness will do me good; for though I may not share it, I shall be pleased with their prosperity. If they are unhappy, I will do all that poverty *can* do to lighten their affliction. Any thing is better than deception—*is it not?*"

"Certainly," replied George, in some confusion; "but you must not make light of the troubles of a young man: light burthens, you know, terribly annoy young shoulders."

"It was no light annoyance, Mr. Hanson, that has troubled you this day. A veteran of my profession ought to know something of the expression that the different passions write upon the human face:—since you have been here, sir, I think I have read yours."

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Mary: and turning to George, she gave him the tumbler, saying, in a low voice, "Pray, do not be offended."

He took the glass, pressing the hand that offered it; and when she asked him whether it pleased him, he replied, "Excellent, but too weak," and he poured a quantity of brandy into the already strong mixture.

"I will sing to you," said Mary, anxious to change the current of her father's thoughts; and, taking forth her guitar, she warbled a simple ballad, with a sweetness of voice and intensity of expression which would have won plaudits from a crowded audience.

George gazed, and listened with admiration; and, excited by the brandy which he had drunk, and to which he was unaccustomed, he rapturously praised her performance, *and forgot Kate Leslie.*

Mr. Middleton, seated at the table, appeared to be entirely engrossed by the volume before him; but when his young companions were unconscious of his scrutiny, his anxious eyes were fixed upon them.

"You are tired, Mary," said George, after she had sung him all his favourite songs; "I will put down your guitar, and now let us talk about the benefit."

Mr. Middleton laid aside his book, and, rising, interrupted his daughter, who was going to reply. "Mary," said he, "I wish you would go to your room and read over your part again;" and Mary, though reluctantly, retired.

"Is the subject that I touched upon disagreeable to you?" inquired George, again replenishing his tumbler.

"On the contrary, my daughter's benefit, here and hereafter, is ever present to my thoughts."

"You are serious to-night, sir," replied George; "we will talk of it to-morrow."

"Strange, that *I* should be serious, is it not?—*I*, the buffoon of the Danesford theatre!"

"I did not mean to offend you, but I fear you are displeased."

"It is time, young man, that we should understand each other.—I ask your pardon,—I address you too familiarly: but it is your own fault,—*you* have sought *us*, *we* never sought *you*; and when you deign to be our guest, there is but one language in which the father of Mary Middleton can address you: she has confided to me all that has passed between you!"

"She has done right: I expected that she would do so," was the reply which George uttered, scarcely knowing what he said.

"It is a poor country actor who addresses you,

and my daughter has been educated for the stage; but it has not been your purpose—no, you have not dared to form a plan for her destruction, taking advantage of her situation? Young man, speak!—you have *not* dared——"

"You wrong me, sir," George faltered.

"I trust I have done so; for, mark me, I would assassinate the man who robbed me of my child!"

"Be calm, I entreat you," said George.

"Calm! He who would glory in the seduction of Mary Middleton would laugh if you suggested to him the propriety of giving her father, the poor actor, the satisfaction of a gentleman. But in *your* countenance I read no deliberate guilt."

"My only object in seeking your acquaintance has been to do you service."

The old man looked at him intently for a moment, and then said,

"You must make allowances for one situated as I am. When a man of your rank deigns to associate with us, I dread his advances, for I cannot fathom his intentions; yet I am painfully aware that my rough manners and my dread of a disgraceful suit may drive from my poor girl, in disgust, an honourable man, whose sole intention was to lay at her feet the offer of an honourable heart.—*Are you such a man?*"

"Is it possible you suspect me!" replied George, utterly bewildered by unwonted excitement and the novelty of his situation.

"If you are not, leave my roof,—never let us see your face again. Forget us, sir—forget us, as *we* will endeavour to forget you; or, if you *do* remember us, let it be in some moment of reckless dissipation, when gazing with the eyes of a voluptuary on

some poor girl who, for her subsistence, dances in the ballet, or sings in the chorus of a London theatre. You will think her an easy conquest; you will say, '*She is only an actress.*' At that moment I would have you think of *us;* and remember that *I* told you, none but a heartless coward would take advantage of a woman merely because she was unprotected and exposed to danger."

"Your daughter, sir, can never be so circumstanced."

"My daughter," replied the old man, "were I to die this night, would have nothing to depend upon but her talents. I am aware she has abilities; but her frame is delicate, and her feelings sensitive. Her abilities may win for her wealth and distinction; but I am not blind to the fact, that her delicacy and sensibility may so far incapacitate her for the exertion of her talents, as to cause her to fail. What then, let me ask you, is Mary's fate?—what, but to become one of the painted crowd who walk in a procession, or sing, and dance, and——Why do I talk of this! the possibility for ever haunts me, but I never spoke of it before."

"And why speak of it now?" said George; "why give way to so sad a foreboding?"

"Because your presence here alarms me. If she *be* doomed to tread the public stage, your attentions will unsettle her mind, and unfit her for the effort."

"What would you have me do?"

"Leave us now, and for ever,—now, ere my daughter returns to us."

"Impossible!" replied George, the vision of the fair girl with her guitar floating before his eyes.

"You say it is impossible, and my daughter has repeated to me your professions of attachment. I

am poor, and was never yet accused of presumption; yet, sir, whatever your expectations may be, and however proud your connexions, I must tell you plainly, that you must speak to me frankly, as a son would speak to a father, or never see dear Mary's face again."

The actor sank back in his chair overcome with the violence of his emotion; and George Hanson rose, and, seizing his hand, declared that his love for Mary was unbounded and most disinterested, and that without her he never could be happy.

In justice to Mr. Middleton, we must remark that he was not at all conscious of the extent of George's potations, nor of the effect which an indulgence to which he was unaccustomed had produced. He naturally heard his declaration with pride and pleasure; and when Mary again joined them, George addressed her openly in the language of love, and kissed her cheek for the first time, unreproved by her father.

A dim indistinct consciousness of the fatal error he was committing haunted George even while he pressed the hand of Mary; but he did not retract: he spoke of the necessity of concealing his engagement for a time; and when he left them at a late hour, he was pressed to the heart of the old actor, and was permitted to embrace his child.

CHAPTER XIV.

Oh, when it is too late
  Thou will regret me;
In vain thou'lt strive to hate,
  Or to forget me:
Thy love for me in vain
  Thou'lt strive to smother,
And ne'er wilt thou again
  So love another!

Oh, when it is too late,
  And I'm forsaken,
Affection, *once* so great,
  Will re-awaken:
And *then* thou wilt renounce
  The spells around thee,
And sigh for ties that once
  So fondly bound thee.

When good Mrs. Podd departed in anger from the lodgings of Mr. George Hanson, slamming the street-door after her to denote her disapprobation, she hurried through the streets of Danesford, looking neither to the right nor the left; and as she went *pat-pat* along, many gazed after her, wondering how a woman so small, so old, and so out of the perpendicular, could contrive to get over the ground so fast.

"There's an end of that!" thought Mrs. Podd; "it's all over now—he sha'n't have her! He does care for her, that's evident, and I'm glad of it, for we'll break his heart!" And on she went, the irritation of her mind accelerating her bodily speed.

"And yet," thought she again, having walked off

a little of her excitement, "he's young—very young; and young men *will* be young men, in spite of all that old women can preach. I should be sorry *quite* to break his heart; he ought to be miserable, and he shall: but, after all, perhaps he may come back to us; for I can't forget the time when I used to dance him on my knee; I've tried to forget it, but I can't; —poor, dear, wicked boy!" And she stopped short, and took out her blue and white cotton pocket-handkerchief, and wiped her eyes, and then proceeded more slowly.

"Poor infatuated boy!" thought she, resuming her less angry cogitations; "one never can answer for any body who gets among the play-actresses! But that can't last—it *sha'n't* last!" and she clenched her stick and shook it. At this moment her eyes were attracted by a large play-bill which a man had just pasted against the wall, and she paused for a moment to read it. Could she believe her eyes! Yes it *was* all over now! for there was a public announcement of George's performance for the benefit of Mr. Middleton, on which occasion his daughter was to make her first public appearance in Juliet. His name, indeed, was not mentioned; but having already heard him speak of the intended degradation, she could not doubt who was meant when she read, "The part of Romeo, by a gentleman amateur, who has kindly offered his services."

Mrs. Podd stamped her high shoe three times on the pavement in violent wrath, and then walked on more rapidly than ever.

"That settles it!" said she aloud to herself, startling quiet people as she passed them. "We've done with him now! *Offered his services* indeed! oh, no doubt—pretty goings on! An *amateur!* I wonder

what an *amateur* means!—another name for a blackguard, I suppose. That ever he should live to be put in print an amateur on the walls of Danesford town! This day week!—an *amateur!* Surely his mother won't rest in her grave! *I* couldn't—I know I couldn't, if *I* were dead; and I wish I were!—oh, I wish I were, before those I love best come, one to sorrow, and one to shame!"

Uttering these broken exclamations, she reached the lane that led down to the village of Mapleton; and in her present state of excitement, dreading a meeting with any of the members of the family at the Rectory, she sat down on a bank by the way-side, and rocking herself to and fro, gave vent to a torrent of tears.

Here she was soon interrupted by Mr. Leslie's young assistant, with whom the reader has as yet been enabled to form but a slight acquaintance.

"My good dame," said he, "what is the matter? Are you ill?"

Mrs. Podd shook her head, motioned impatiently with her stick, (as if to "marshal him the way that he was going,") but did not remove her handkerchief from her eyes.

"I cannot leave you in this situation," said Mr. Ibbotson. "Have you fallen down? You really ought to take care of yourself; you are too weak for long walks."

"Weak! I am strong enough. The weakness of our sex is always the talk of you men; more shame for you when you trample on us!"

"Good gracious!" said the tutor, interpreting her literally, "you don't mean that any man has ridden over you? Where are you hurt?"

"*Here!*" cried the old woman, putting her hand

on her heart. "No one has ridden over me; I wish somebody would: there's no comfort on this side the grave. It's *here* I'm hurt,—*here!*"

"What *can* you be talking of?"

"Talking of!—the ingratitude of man,—base, abominable, unfeeling!"

"Surely," thought Ibbotson, when she paused in her tirade, actually wanting words to express the extent of her indignation,—"surely old Podd *can't* be crossed in love!"

"I'll tell you what, Mr. Ibbotson," said she, at last starting up,—"it is time to take a decided step."

"Which way?"

"Which way!—*any way* but the way we have gone."

"My good woman, how am I to comprehend your meaning, when I don't know whence you come?"

"Well, then, I'm glad I met you here," replied Mrs. Podd; "for I believe you have good sense,—which is more than poor Mr. Leslie has, I fear."

"Do you presume to speak thus of your master?"

"Presume!—and, pray, do you suppose any body in the wide world loves the old man better than I do?—No, sir, not even his daughters; they love him in a different way, but not better. I knew him and served him when the mother of those two girls was alive; and for her sake I'll live as long as I can in this bad world, spite of all the bad people that are in it, to watch over them! *Presume*, indeed!—come, I like that!"

"Well, well, you meant no harm, and I'm sure *I* meant none."

"You know as well as I do that poor old Leslie has no strength of mind; and as to guiding and guarding young men, he is just as fit to—to—go and

be an amateur, as they call it, and act Romeo at the Danesford playhouse!"

Mr. Ibbotson stared in amazement, and secretly debated in his mind whether Mrs. Podd was deranged in her intellects, or had been induced to take a drop of something strong which had got into her head.

"Act at the playhouse!—Mr. Leslie!—a schoolmaster and a clergyman!—What are you talking of?"

"I say, as to his being a schoolmaster at all, and especially a guardian to such a youth as young Hanson, he might as well do what I said, and what young Hanson himself is going to do."

"Are you in earnest?"

"I am,—I heard him say it. Not that that much signifies *now*,—for a man that would do it would tell any lies; but I saw it *blackguarded* all over the town against the walls. He's going to strut about on the boards of the public playhouse, which, I'm sure, must have risen originally from the devil's own dominions!"

"You use very strong language to-day, Mrs. Podd; and you're not quite right about your derivation," said the tutor. "The *first* plays were sacred, and were called mysteries."

"Then I'm sure there's no mystery about the matter *now*, and they're profane enough in all conscience."

"There's much to be said for the drama, too," replied Ibbotson, who never could resist exhibiting his little bit of knowledge. "We mustn't forget Shakspeare: and then, you know, Terence, Euripides, Æschylus,—we mustn't forget the ancients."

"Bury the ancients," cried Mrs. Podd impatiently; "I'm only anxious about a youth."

"Well, and what would you have me do?"

"Go to old Leslie.—But no,—on second thoughts, I'll go myself; I've always had as much influence with him as any body; and if he won't take care of his daughter's happiness, why I must make him."

"His daughter's happiness!" exclaimed the tutor, changing colour. "What has *that* to do with Mr. Hanson?"

"Well, I do believe nobody has common sense in the house but myself!" replied the old woman; "and even I can't keep my tongue quiet. Why, who can answer for Kate, when a handsome lad like that is always here, as George—as Mr. Hanson *used* to be."

"Kate,—Miss Katherine, I mean,—is so young."

"Oh! you know nothing of the world," interrupted Mrs. Podd: "it is lucky I do. Here, give me your arm, for I'm tired to death!" and leaning on Mr. Ibbotson's arm, she proceeded slowly to the Rectory, and having reached the gate, abruptly left him to go in pursuit of Mr. Leslie. With him she was closeted for a long time. His two daughters, who were sitting at work in the little drawing-room, wondered what could keep him so late in his study; and at length Kate, who began to grow uneasy, threw aside her embroidery and went to seek him.

The room dignified by the appellation of Mr. Leslie's study was small, very simply furnished, and fitted up with a few books. The good clergyman's studious days had long been over, and this low, dull apartment had been the scene of his lonely hours of sad contemplation, and of the regrets of an inactive mind yielding to the inroads of apathy and despair.

There are some mourners who, in the first anguish of bereavement, shrink from consolation, as if to

struggle against despair were an infidelity to the departed. Most men have some dear ties left on earth; some beings dependent on them for comfort and support, and for these they feel that exertion becomes a duty; religion inculcates such a feeling, and God in his mercy strengthens the mind that makes the effort. But poor Mr. Leslie's heart was broken; and so entirely were his energies, and almost his affections, buried in the grave of his wife, that his young daughters, in losing their mother, lost the active superintendence of a father also. It was not that he wanted religious feeling, but his body and mind sank into an apathy almost amounting to imbecility; and though on certain occasions he could be roused to speak and act in a manner sufficiently decided to rescue him from the imputation of utter incapacity, still no one could be so unfit to act as the guardian of a young man, or to watch over two beautiful girls.

When Kate entered his room, he was sealing a letter; and Mrs. Podd was walking hurriedly up and down and wiping her eyes.

"Is nothing the matter?" said Kate, pausing at the door.

Mr. Leslie looked up from his employment, pushed his spectacles to the back of his forehead, and said nothing.

"The matter, truly!" replied Mrs. Podd, standing still and almost wringing her hands; "nothing new, and the sooner it's over the better."

"Have we any property belonging to George Hanson, Kate, besides what he left in his room?" inquired Mr. Leslie.

"To Mr. Hanson, sir!" exclaimed Kate, sitting down on the nearest chair, and clasping the hand of the old woman, who had immediately walked to her side.

"Yes," proceeded Mr. Leslie, unconscious of the pain he inflicted; "I have written to him, and it is possible he may never return to us."

Kate looked imploringly at her nurse for information, and the old woman said,

"Yes! and it was high time to write to him,—living away so long, and now going on the public stage!"

"His absence, I own, surprised me," said Mr. Leslie; "and perhaps I was wrong not to interfere before: but I was not aware that his mother's old friends had left Danesford. But, now that I know the truth, and the danger in which he is likely to involve himself, I have written to say that he must return immediately, or, should he fail to do so, his property will be forwarded to him, and I will never receive him again."

"Never!" said Kate in a whisper, audible only to the old woman who leaned over her.

"I have no longer authority," continued her father; "but were he to commit this worse than folly while dwelling under my roof, it would of course appear that I sanctioned it. That must not be: I have expressed my wishes, nay, my commands,—I must be implicitly obeyed, or our intercourse must end."

"Oh, nurse!" whispered Kate earnestly to her old friend, "intercede for George before it is too late."

"Intercede!" replied Mrs. Podd, speaking also in a whisper; "no, no,—not I. I have suggested this,—I have advised it."

"You!"

"I have done as my dear mistress, your mother, would have acted had she been alive."

"Then," replied Kate, "I know the result: he will return to us no more!"

"Such is my expectation, and such my wish."

"You have seen him, then?"

"I have."

"If such, after seeing him, *be* your wish, I submit."

"Hark!" said Mrs. Podd aloud; "there is the bell for evening prayers. Miss Kate does not seem quite well, sir; I think she had better go to her room."

"No, no; I am better now," replied Kate, rising; and leaning on Mrs. Podd's arm, she followed her father to the little school-room, where they were all accustomed to assemble for morning and evening prayers. "I will pray for strength—for resignation, —and I will pray for *him;* and you will, dear nurse, will you not? Yes, we'll pray for *him*," whispered Kate as she walked through the narrow passage.

Mr. Ibbotson stood with his book open, ready to read the evening service. He turned an anxious glance towards Kate as she entered, and, apparently struck with her appearance, he started and changed colour. The boys were all in their places, and Jane was already waiting for them. They all knelt down; and poor Kate, instead of going to her accustomed place, fell on her knees by Mrs. Podd, and buried her face in her lap. Mr. Ibbotson then with a low and faltering voice read the prayers.

Kate Leslie raised her head but once, and then she looked towards the vacant place that in former days was occupied by George Hanson. At that moment, George, with a heated brain and a flushed cheek, was listening to the song of Mary Middleton.

Poor George had certainly been most unfortunate in the arrangements made by his parents for his fu-

ture guidance. When Lord William Hanson died, all his originally small fortune had been deeply mortgaged, or had fallen into the clutches of usurious Jews. In case of Lady William's death he named a distant relation of her own, the sole surviving trustee of her marriage settlements, as custodian of her small income, authorising him to use his own discretion in fixing the amount of allowance to be made to George from time to time as his age increased. Now it afterwards proved that this man, a cousin of Lady William's father, the Danesford apothecary and alderman, himself an extensive grocer, and by no means a man of business, except in his own particular business, had little or no discretion; or, perhaps, having a wife and a family, he did not want to trouble himself about other people's affairs. What George asked for, was, therefore, generally promply granted during his minority, and when he came of age, Mr. Dibbs joyfully yielded up his trust, and, and as he himself expressed it, washed his hands of the business. With regard to personal guardianship, Lord William named the boy's mother, and most particularly stated that it was his express desire that she should hereafter use her own unbiassed judgment in the choice of a guardian. Mr. Leslie therefore found himself in a most embarrassing predicament; he had no control over the young man's pecuniary affairs, and how, at his present age, was it possible for him to control his actions?

Had it not been for these most imperfect and inefficient arrangements, George would have been a ward in Chancery. His expenditure would have been controlled, his guardian would have been legally responsible to the court, and would have possessed the power of forbidding, and effectually preventing any very imprudent act.

CHAPTER XV.

Look at his gray hair,
  Look at his wrinkled brow,
And think HE once was young, and fair,
  And full of hope, as THOU!

"You are a devilish lucky dog, Hanson!" said the Honourable Mr. Fitzville Fancourt, an intimate friend of the lisping Mr. Skinflint, and recently an inseparable of George Hanson's; "yes, by Jove, you *are* a lucky fellow!"

"Lucky!" replied George, pushing aside his late breakfast; "I wish *I* thought so."

"Why, what can you possibly have to complain of?—a lovely girl is evidently dying for you."

"Ah, so *you* say; but it does not follow that I am to believe it," replied Hanson. "And even were it true, marriage is a desperate act."

"Marriage!—And who talked of marriage, you rural Corydon?—not *I*, I'm sure. For my part, I never supposed you contemplated any thing so preposterously ridiculous."

"And, pray, what did you suppose I *was* contemplating?"

"Why—perhaps—the less we say about that the better."

George was silent.

"You are not going back to that pedagogue parson's, at the two-story-high rectory, I trust?"

"Really," said George, "I hardly know what I shall do; I have no fixed plan."

"No plan!—You'll take her to London?"

"Take whom to London?"

"Pshaw! Miss Middleton, to be sure."

"To be candid with you, *were* I to marry her—"

"Marry *her!*" interrupted his fashionable guest with unfeigned astonishment.

"Why, to tell you the truth, I fear I *have* committed myself."

"You were *going* to commit yourself, truly; but I'm glad you confided in me, for it cannot be permitted. What! marry an obscure, provincial, unknown, barn-door actress of all-work!—Impossible! —Were it a leading London one, indeed, no matter how bad her character, there might be a certain *éclat* about it; but a poor, sawney, respectable, thirty-shilling-a-week little woman, would never do. 'Pon my life, Hanson, I'm glad I knew it in time to warn you; for I give you my honour, not a soul would ever notice you again;—I'd cut you dead, my dear fellow, I declare to you most solemnly."

"With such a wife, it is not probable that I should throw myself in your way."

"But I'm quite certain that you never have thought seriously of marriage. You like a little eccentricity, and you are laughing at me.—But you'll find that father of hers a queer subject to deal with."

"He is a most respectable man," replied George.

"Yes, so I'm told;—great bore that! You are sadly mixed up with dull, respectable people:—that Mapleton family was quite enough to kill you."

At that moment a servant entered the room and gave George a letter, which he read with evident agitation.

"Oh! never mind me," said Fancourt, taking up a newspaper: "a sentimental appeal from Miss Middleton."

"You are mistaken," replied George, rising and pacing the room much disturbed.

"Then a jobation from the parson at Mapleton,—a rod in pickle, hey, for a naughty boy?"

"You are nearer the mark now, I confess; and really this is too much, at my age, to be dictated to so peremptorily!"

"What has the pragmatical pedagogue the impudence to say?"

"There is the letter; pray read it. I am excited, and not able perhaps to judge fairly."

Fancourt raised his glass, and with elevated eyebrows and a contemptuous sneer skimmed Mr. Leslie's letter.

"Oh, let us see:—'Sorry to dictate—best of motives—peremptorily forbid the performance at the theatre—to return to the Rectory without delay,—and if not at once obeyed—all articles belonging to you—forwarded to your lodgings—as you will not again be received under my roof.'—Did ever anybody hear such a tirade!"

"It was high time indeed," said George, "to leave his roof!" and he rang the bell.

"He'll rap your knuckles when you get back!" cried Fancourt.

The servant entered the room.

"Is any body waiting?" inquired George, bursting with rage.

"A little ragged boy, sir."

"I'll write an answer,—bid him wait;" and after the servant was gone, he added, "I'll merely order

that every thing I possess may instantly be sent here, as I have no intention of returning."

"Very proper that," replied his guest, eagerly adding fuel to the fiery mood of George. "It won't do to admit that you are actually turned out of the parson's house, hey?"

"Such is positively the fact, however," replied George.

"Hold! don't *you* write,—give *me* the pen—let me say you are obliged to go in a hurry to a rehearsal, and have deputed *me* to order your baggage to be sent."

"By all means."

"Very well:" taking up a pen and scrawling a few lines, "there—I've done already:—'Mr. George Hanson presents his compliments to Mr. Leslie, and begs his things may be sent to him immediately. Being engaged to attend a rehearsal at the theatre, he has deputed a friend to answer Mr. Leslie's communication.'—There—will that do?"

"Admirably!—Seal it—send it."

In another hour this brief and chilling note was in poor Mr. Leslie's trembling hand, and had been perused by his daughters and Mrs. Podd; and that evening the Rectory was stripped of every article belonging to George Hanson.

George that day did attend a rehearsal, and afterwards accompanied Mr. Middleton and the young actress to their lodgings. On their arrival there, Miss Middleton retired to her own apartment, and he was rather disconcerted at finding himself alone with the old man.

It was a great relief to him when his host proposed that they should take advantage of the fine spring morning, and spend the remainder of it in walking

in the fields. One observation of the old man, however startled him, for it reminded him of what others might say, or rather what others might *think*, of his theatrical associates.

"But, perhaps I am wrong, sir," said Mr. Middleton; "and you will be ashamed to walk with an old actor."

"That is not likely," replied George in some confusion.

"Why, perhaps not; and, indeed, it would be a sad thing for Mary if her own husband were to be ashamed of her own father."

The young man tried to laugh; but there was no concealing from himself the fact that he should be ashamed of his father-in-law. For the present, however, he consoled himself with the idea that their rural *tête-à-tête* would be put to the account of the approaching exhibition at the theatre—merely one of the many readings or private rehearsals of Romeo. He, therefore, walked unembarrassed through the streets of Danesford by the side of old Middleton; though he secretly rejoiced when they found themselves in the solitude of green lanes.

"Yours, after all, must be a happy life," said George, "in spite of its anxieties."

"Happy if it lead to independence; but you know not—you cannot imagine the misery of some who toil for the amusement of the public. Oh, how little does the spectator think, when the features smile and the pliant limb is exerted, how heavy the heart may be!"

"You are alluding to a class far below the intellectual members of *your* profession," replied George.

"I am so; and I once had an opportunity of witnessing a scene which deeply impressed me, and

which I will venture to describe to you. Very early in life, indeed before I became an actor, I was induced to go abroad, in the hope of realising an independence, under the auspices of a female relative, who had united herself to a Belgian. I was disappointed, and was on my way to my native country, when, arriving at the frontier town of France, I met with an itinerant exhibiter whose sufferings will never be obliterated from my memory. If you will sit down by me on this bank, I will tell you my story in my own way."

But the tale that Mr. Middleton told shall be reserved for a separate chapter.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE STRONG MAN.

Condemn'd to face, day after day, the rabble's ruffian gaze—
To shrink before their merriment, or blush before their praise;
In anguish I must still perform the oft-repeated task,
And courteously reply to all Frivolity may ask!
And bear inhuman scrutiny, and hear the hateful jest;
And when they leave me—crawl away to tears instead of rest!

"THE fair was at the full,—not Bartlemy Fair, but one far more picturesque and interesting,—and never having seen the humours of a foreign fair, I was delighted on my arrival at Lille to find that large and busy city arrayed in its annual holiday garb.

"The periodical bustle which animated, or rather, which disturbed my own native provincial town in Gloucestershire, had been my *beau-idéal* of a fair. The stalls with the apples and gingerbread-nuts; the screaming female venders of the same, (the fairest of the fair!) the canvass portable ale-houses, with benches and tables, and smoking men in smock-frocks within, and flags flying without to tempt more customers;—all these had been the delight of my boyhood; not forgetting the thimble-rig, the fortune-teller, the merry-go-round, and the one show, with a big drum beat vigorously on the platform in front by an itinerant Mr. Merriman, and a young lady in gauze and spangles, with ostrich feathers,

blue, red, green, and yellow, who walked up and down, that we might fully understand what a very charming person it was who intended to dance on the rope and stand upon her head at the top of a pole by-and-by, for the entertainment of those who were fortunate enough to be able to pay their twopences for admission into the interior of what was denominated 'SAUNDERS'S PAVILION.'—Such being my early impressions of the scenery, machinery, dresses, and decorations of a fair, it may be supposed that I was not a little struck with the dignity, solidity, and apparent wealth of that which I so unexpectedly encountered at Lille.

"In the large *Place*, several rows of temporary shops had been constructed of timber, and roofed with sheet-lead; so that in case of bad weather the *marchands* and their various treasures would be protected from the rain. These travelling traders had greatly the air of men of the world; and as they annually trod the same path, revisiting the same places at the same periods, they were hailed as old friends by many an old customer. There were two Turks, in particular—handsome men, arrayed in the picturesque costume of their country, who stood behind their counter, laughing and talking with those who passed by, not exactly with an air of equality, but rather with one of conscious yet affable superiority.

"But if the sellers interested me, far more was I surprised at the wares which they sold. There was, indeed, no lack of cakes and sugar-plums; nor were toys and gingerbread-nuts forgotten:—but in close proximity to the cheapest and the nastiest articles, I found trinkets of fine gold, Bréguet watches, and diamonds of the purest water; a tin trumpet, price

two *sous*, close to a pair of brilliant ear-rings marked six thousand francs! Whether people ever really go and furnish their jewel-boxes at such a market, it is not in my power to say.

"But it was at night that Lille fair appeared to most advantage: even brilliants became more bright under the glare of lamps judiciously disposed; and the fragile *bijouterie* of France shone forth in their glass cases as temptingly as the more solid productions of Storr and Mortimer.

"Having lounged along the line of shops until my curiosity was satisfied, my purse lightened, and my legs weary, I turned towards the upper part of the *Place*, where stood a range of exhibitions most tempting to eyes that had looked upon the world not quite so long as mine.

"I passed by the wax-work, because I hate those cold, stiff, transparent, glassy-eyed imitations of mortality. I did not pay the conjuror a visit, because the last time I entered that sort of exhibition, intending of course to be one of the audience, the exhibiter thought proper to single me out and render me one of the performers, second only to himself. When he wanted a watch, he always asked for mine, for which I have an especial fondness, and never like to see it in any stranger's hands. Then all sorts of tricks were played with it; it flew, or seemed to fly, here, there, and every where; and though it was returned to me without any apparent damage, I have never had confidence in its movements since. Then my pocket-handkerchief was borrowed and exhibited, at a period, too, when I had a cold in my head: and when articles were missing, he always made it appear that I had secreted them. So I hurried by the

booth of the "*cunning man*," and paused before that of the "*strong*" one.

"Now this same "HERCULES," for so was he designated, professed to raise enormous weights. This part of his exhibition had no charms for me; nor can I understand the enthusiasm with which people congregate to see a fellow-creature shorten his life. Under some circumstances, when by taking prodigious leaps, unnaturally distorting his body, or walking up a single rope to a terrific height, he gives his audience *a chance* of seeing him *killed on the spot*, the attraction becomes doubly great. But horrors have no charms for me, and I was tempted into the strong man's booth by the announcement that he would give a living representation of the most admired statues of antiquity.

"I was late, and when I entered, the exhibiter was standing on a pedestal in the attitude of Apollo. I was surprised to see a youth, apparently scarce one-and-twenty, formed certainly in the mould of a Hercules, but evidently too young to undertake with safety the astonishing feats of strength described in his *affiche*. Though wonderfully muscular, his limbs were graceful, his attitudes were free from vulgarity, and his costume, though necessarily adapted to the nature of his exhibition, was perfectly delicate. His symmetrical arms and his fine throat were bare. The expression of his handsome countenance betrayed disquietude and anxiety; but I supposed him merely anxious, as it was the first day of the fair, to make a favourable impression on the very scanty assembly. This end seemed to be attained, for they were tumultuous in their applause, especially when, having left his pedestal, he commenced that part of

his task which, though little to my taste, had been eagerly expected by them.

"The poor boy, for he really looked little more, proceeded to realise all the promises made in his printed bills. Prodigious were the weights he raised; and some that it was utterly impossible for him to move from the earth, were placed *upon him;* and though they did not *crush* him, his sufferings must have been acute, and he bore them without flinching. Large and muscular though his frame appeared, his fair countenance was that of a stripling; light hair curled round his forehead, now bathed with the dews of over-exertion, and on his cheek there was either the hectic of ill health, or a spot of rouge, ill put on, to imitate youth's roses. In every pause there was a short dry cough, never to be mistaken by one who has heard that fatal signal by his own fireside: but he still proceeded with his task, though each new effort was more difficult and painful than the last.

"At length but one feat remained to be performed, but it required more exertion and endurance than all the rest. His legs were to be fastened to an upright pillar, and when his body was in a horizontal position, all the weights which he had raised singly were to be supported by him in one accumulated mass.

"I hastily rose to leave the booth; but just as the exhibiter was preparing himself for the effort, a little boy ran to him on the stage and whispered something in his ear. The young man clasped his hands, kissed the child, and then looked wildly and wistfully on those around him; and when the person who had assisted him prepared to put the fastenings on his feet, he started back, and I heard him say, in a low voice,

"'No, no, I can do no more! Therese—I must go to her; she will die,—she will die!'

"His rough companion made some hasty answer; and he then pressed his hands firmly on his forehead, and leaned against the side of the stage, apparently in a state of exhaustion.

"I would gladly have seen the curtain fall; but those who, like myself, had paid their money at the door, expected to have their money's worth, and after a very brief pause, loud shouts were raised, and the last act of the exhibition demanded. I saw the young exhibiter rouse himself with an effort, and, calling to his assistant, he cried,

"'Now—quick, quick, and let me go to her!'

"To me it appeared that tears were streaming from his eyes: I saw him prepare for the trial, but I saw no more; I leaned forward and covered my eyes with my cloak. The applauding shouts of those near me proved that the exhibiter had satisfied them; but ere I again ventured to look up, the curtain had fallen.

"I was glad to find myself in the open air again, and, turning from the glare and revelry of the still busy fair, I walked along an almost deserted street which led towards the ramparts. As I proceeded slowly, thinking of the strained sinews of the poor fellow whose exertions I had just painfully witnessed, two figures approached me, a man and a little child; and though the figure of the former was closely enveloped in a dark mantle, I recognised the Hercules, and the boy who had interrupted his performance.

"'I don't know what is the matter with me, Frederick,' said he, faintly: 'I am ill; your bad news chilled me to the heart.'

"'I'm very sorry, papa,' replied the child: 'was I naughty to come?'

"'Naughty!—no, dearest boy; but we ought to be there, and—and—why is this?—I cannot support myself.'

"'Lean on me,' said the poor infant, who could scarcely have borne the weight of his father's hand.

"'Let *me* assist you,' said I, advancing; 'you are ill, exhausted: you are wrong to do so much; you will suffer for it.'

"'*I* suffer!' replied the youth: 'I care not for myself.—But you are a stranger—an Englishman: I cannot expect *you* to assist a poor mountebank.'

"'Lean upon me,' I replied; and, unable to proceed without assistance, he leaned upon my shoulder.

"'We proceeded for some time in silence; but having reached a mean-looking house in an obscure street, he paused.

"'This is my lodging,' said he. 'I thank you—I am better now;' and relinquishing my support, he nearly fell to the earth.

"'Go in with the child,' I answered; 'but pray admit me when I return, for I will bring you something that will revive you.'

"He made no answer, and I left them to seek for some restoratives; and having procured what I wanted, I returned, and finding the door open, I ventured to enter.

"Upon a wretched bed in one corner of the mean apartment lay what once must have been a beautiful young woman. Disease and want had wasted her to a mere skeleton, and death was written legibly in her anxious, meager countenance. On the floor by the bed lay on his face the strong man of the fair: the sight of his poor wife, (for such, notwithstanding his

youth, she was,) fearfully changed since he went forth to exhibit himself for her sake, had entirely overcome him, and, while tears streamed from his eyes, his muscular frame was shaken with the sobs of anguish. The little child sat on the ground by his father, weeping bitterly.

"The dying woman alone appeared sensible of my presence; and, apologising for my intrusion, I briefly explained how much I had been interested by the young man, and how anxious I was to be of use to him.

"'Alas!' said she, 'I fear no one can be of much use to him now;—I have been his ruin, and my death will be death to him. He is well born, sir, and highly bred;—*I* have made him what you saw him this night. Fool that he is, to love me still!'

"'Compose yourself,' I replied; 'all may yet be well.'

"'All *might* be well, would he but survive me, and forget me; but he will die,—I know it,—and we shall be buried in the same grave.'

"'You said he was well born; will not his relations aid you?'

"'You have never known misfortune, sir, said she bitterly: 'you would otherwise have known that wealthy relatives, instead of *aiding* the unfortunate, are apt to turn over every leaf of his past life, to seek out a reason why they ought to desert him, and to sanction their assertion that he merited his doom.'

"'No one feels the truth of what you say more keenly than myself. May I ask his error?'

"'A great one, sir, and one that, I own, deserved punishment,—but not the heartless desertion which he has experienced. He loved *me*, sir, and I was

poor and friendless. Not that his *love* for me was his crime,—had it led to my seduction, his proud friends would scarce have blamed him; but he married me,—before he was seventeen, and when I was a mere child myself, he married me,—and though they urged him to renounce a marriage which they said might be proved illegal, he never would desert *me*, and so all have deserted *him*.'

"'And why the exhibition that I this day witnessed?'

"'*Why!*—because I was starving—dying,—and I believe he is now dying too, partly from the effort, partly from the degradation!'

"'Hush!' I whispered; 'he is quiet now,—I think he is asleep. Take some of this nourishment;—nay, consider how important it is that when he wakes, he should find you better.'

"Therese was struck with the truth of this, and took some of the refreshment I offered her; but, with my consent, she gave a large portion to the little child.

"He ate eagerly for a moment; and then we saw him divide what she had given him, and lay the largest portion aside.

"'What are you about?' said I gently; 'cannot you eat it?'

"'Hush!' whispered the little fellow, with tears in his eyes, and pointing to the sleeping man: 'papa has had none, you know.'

"We did not speak for some moments, for we were touched by the child's simple words.

"'How old is the boy?' I inquired at length.

"'Four years old. His poor father is not yet two-and-twenty: he looks younger in face; and as for his figure, you must not judge of that,—every muscle has now been unnaturally forced.'

"'Hush! he wakes.'

"And the Hercules began to move; and, slowly and feebly raising himself from the ground, he sat up and looked wildly around him.

"'Something nice for papa,' cried the child; and, running to him, it placed before him the little treasure it had saved.

"'Frederick!—Ah! I remember now,' said he. 'Therese—she is not—No, no, no,—she lives!' and he rose and rushed into her arms.

"I knew that they had sufficient sustenance for that night, and softly, and without one word of adieu, I rose and left the house.

"I called the next day, and found Therese in a deep sleep, or rather torpor, and her husband, who sat pale and motionless by her side, raised his finger to his lip as I entered. I took a seat at some distance from the bed, and silently watched the group,—the dying woman, her distracted husband, and the little boy, who, kneeling at his father's feet, held one of his hands, and buried his face in his lap.

"At length the young man raised his head, and his eyes met mine. Slowly and hopelessly he shook his head, and, rising, walked over to the part of the room where I was sitting, followed by the child.

"'We need not fear disturbing her,' said he; 'she will soon slumber in the grave, without a dream, without a sorrow!'

"'Nay, hope for the best,' I replied, taking his hand.

"'Perhaps that *is* the best for *her*,' he cried: 'but for *me*, and for this poor boy—Oh, what will become of *him!*'

"'Alas! I can do little,' was my answer.

"'You!—*you* are a stranger,—you have given us

your sympathy,—what could we expec more? Besides, *you* have no wealth?'

"'Indeed I have not.'

"'Oh, I knew it! Had you been rich, instead of pitying me, you would have soon found out some early error, some past folly—*any thing* as an excuse for not relieving us. But she still lives, and I can still support her.'

"'You will not attempt that painful exhibition to-night: you cannot endure the fatigue; your hand now burns with fever.'

"'So much the better: that fever will support me. Look at these limbs, that I was once proud of,—their strength cannot be gone; and if I earn enough for her and the boy, what can *I* require? When the muscles shrink, 'twill be time for me to think of food.'

"'Do stay at home, papa,' said the boy. 'I can't do like *you;* but I'll go and do my best, if it's to feed mamma.'

"'Poor boy!' cried his father, kissing him.

"'Oh, I sha'n't mind—I like jumping about, and I'll do my *very best.*'

"We were interrupted by Therese, who, starting from her trance-like slumber, called for her husband and her boy; and, knowing that I could do no good, and that my presence might be felt as a restraint, I left the room without attracting her attention.

* * * * *

"That night the lamps again beamed from the booth of the Hercules. The populace, attracted by the favourable report of the few who had witnessed his exertions on the preceding evening, now thronged the space allotted for spectators; and leaving his poor Therese more feeble and exhausted than he had

ever yet seen her, the strong man, after kissing again and again her cold and colourless lips, once more went forth to expose himself to public wonder. His limbs trembled and his temples throbbed whilst he again assumed the dress he was accustomed to wear; the very effort of fastening his sandals seemed too much for him; cold drops stood upon his forehead, and the beating of his pulse seemed audible: but the heavy weights were placed before him, and, hailed by shouts and acclamations, the strong man proceeded with his task.

* * * * *

"Poor Frederick knelt weeping by the corpse of his mother; but the orphan boy was the only mourner:—in the same hour that Therese ceased to breathe, her husband fell dead upon the stage: the iron weights rolled heavily from him to the feet of the spectators: for the strong man had broken a blood-vessel."

* * * * *

CHAPTER XVII.

Oh! name him not, unless it be
  In terms I shall not blush to hear:
Oh! name him not, though false to me,
  Forget not he was once so dear.
Oh! think of former happy days,
  When none could breathe a dearer name;
And if you can no longer praise,
  Be silent, and forbear to blame.

"Your story has deeply interested me," said George Hanson: "do you know what became of the boy?"

"No; I left Lille the following day: he very probably was taken from the town by some itinerant showman, and taught his poor father's trade. I never now see a man distort his body, or risk his life upon a rope, that I do not remember there may be some loved being on a sick bed for whose support he exerts himself, and over whom he will that night keep watch. And is it not the same with us? We are spared their painful and dangerous feats; but is not the effort a severe one, when we feign buoyancy of spirits, and affect to laugh, though the heart is heavy? I therefore rejoice at the fair prospect my child has before her; for I do believe you love her, sir, and I hope you will make her happy."

"She *deserves* happiness," said George, withdrawing his eyes from the gaze of the old man, and stooping to pluck a flower at his feet.

"*Desert*, in this world, is small security for happiness. But I do rejoice in her being snatched from a life of public exertion; and gentle, unoffending, and affectionate as she is, I cannot believe that any man could find it in his heart to neglect or injure her."

"You cannot fear it," replied George.

"For my own part, I will not, if I can avoid it, owe any thing to her elevation: it would be painful to me to hear it said, 'He has married his child to a wealthy man who supports him.' I have determined to make one trial in the metropolis,—I am permitted to do so,—and should I be successful, a lucrative engagement will be the result. I have made every arrangement, and shall go to London almost immediately after my benefit. I can rely upon my child's discretion; and as my absence will be short, I shall leave her here until my return. Should my success lead to a permanent engagement in London, I shall return and fetch her; should I fail—I *must* return and plod on to my grave in the old way."

"You leave your daughter here? you may depend on my attention to her."

"On the contrary, I shall depend on her not receiving your visits until my return. I shall not be absent more than a week. When I return, I shall ask you to confide to me your plans for the future. You are very young, sir, and I may be blamed for encouraging you to unite yourself to my daughter; but *I* am old, and may soon be called away: no wonder, then, that I should cling to one who offers her protection. We must thoroughly understand each other: I will sanction no long engagement.—But enough of this for the present; it is time we should walk towards the town."

They both rose and slowly retraced their steps; and both were silent and abstracted.

Irritated with his former friends, and thrown perpetually in the way of a girl so fascinating as Mary Middleton, perhaps few young men will wonder that he forgot the more retiring and uncultivated charms of Kate. But Kate had been his first love, and forgetfulness could be only temporary: charmed as he might be by the voice and accomplishments of the actress, every act of his that tended to entangle him with her, and to alienate him from Mapleton, too surely led the way to future deep regret.

But no such thoughts now entered the mind of the young amateur: Romeo's costume was a matter of importance, the rehearsals occupied much of his time, and all his other hours were passed with the fascinating Juliet, who no longer had any reason to conceal from him the devoted affection with which he had inspired her. Hers was a first love, and she never knew a second: he had already professed to love another, and having been once forsworn, who shall expect constancy from him!

It is not to be supposed that a young girl so situated, receiving the undisguised homage of a young man of Mr. Hanson's station, could escape scandal. The gossips of Danesford had long taken cognisance of their proceedings; and the shrugs and knowing looks of Mr. Skinflint, whenever his friend was mentioned, seemed to imply the worst. These imputations, however, by no means injured the approaching benefit. It is a singular fact, that the public appear sometimes to like a little mischief in public characters; and young ladies who ought to be supposed to know nothing of Mistress *This* and Miss *That*, except as the representatives of dramatic characters on the stage, now discuss their private demerits and their exceedingly uninteresting amours in a manner much too knowing.

Every place in the Danesford theatre was taken for the evening of Mr. Middleton's benefit; and even the musicians were to be invisible, that their places might be turned to account. In general, the parts of Romeo and Juliet are enacted by two good people who care no more for each other than Lady Capulet cares for the man at the back of the gallery; the ardent young Montague, perhaps, secretly considering his Juliet a dowdy, while the fair Capulet looks upon him as a vulgar stick of a man. But there was no want of reality in the loves of the two young and handsome representatives of the hero and heroine on this occasion; and there was an intensity in their passions, and therefore an illusion about their sorrows, that produced a very great impression on the spectators.

Every hand gave token of approbation, and every voice spoke in praise, save the hands and the voice of one solitary person in the pit,—and that was a member of the family at Mapleton Rectory.

The play-tickets given by George to Mrs. Podd on the evening of her visit to his lodgings had been carried home in her pocket, as evidences of his scarcely credible delinquency, rather than as means by which she or any of the family might gain admission to the scene of his disgrace; and after being indignantly exhibited to poor Kate and her sister, they were thrown into the fire-place, there to be consumed the next time that a fire was lighted.

"Though the weather *is* hot," said she, "I should like to have a blaze, for the sake of seeing those abominations burn!"

"Well, for my part," said Jane, "I should like to see him act."

"Oh, Jane, do not say so!" replied Kate.

"Why, if he is to act, my seeing him will not add to the mischief; and I do so love a play!"

"I would just as soon go to see him hung!" said Mrs. Podd.

"Oh! now you are worse than Jane."

"Worse than Jane, indeed! worse than Jane!" cried Mrs. Podd, glad to vent her passion on somebody. "Is that the way you speak to old age and infirmity, and to one who has nursed you!—and of your sister too! though that I don't so much mind, for she is a fool to wish to go."

"I can make allowances for the natural curiosity of youth," replied Kate quietly.

"Oh, you *can* make allowances for *her!*"

"Yes, and for *you too*, dear nurse; for your feelings are excited; you are mortified, hurt at the conduct of one you love;" and Kate kissed her affectionately.

"This is all stuff, my dear," exclaimed Mrs. Podd, returning the kiss and wiping her eyes; "we ought to forget him."

"Forget him if you can, nurse," replied Kate; "and *I*—if I *cannot* forget, will think of him without resentment, and pray that he may be happy."

"But I'm sure you don't want to make use of those dirty tickets!" said the old woman, peering among the coals.

"Certainly not: even Jane, I'm sure, on consideration, will not wish to go."

"I always know that your judgment, Kate, is better than mine."

"Very well, then,—there let 'em burn in the first autumnal fire," said Mrs. Podd; and wishing by active employment to change the ruffled current of her ideas, she snatched up her stick, hurried away, and the *pat-pat* of her high shoe soon resounded on the paved floor of the kitchen.

Two days afterwards, one of those chilly days came which now and then remind us that we have made a mistake when we supposed summer was arrived. Mr. Leslie complained of the cold, and in the evening a bright cheerful fire blazed in the grate. Kate involuntarily sighed as she thought of the play-tickets;—not that she had any idea of using them, but she would have hoarded them up among other sad or pleasant records connected with her father's now alienated pupil. They had been sent by him as a present, his last present; one that under the circumstances might be deemed by some persons almost an insult; but then she acquitted him. "He may be thoughtless, careless, ungrateful," she said to herself; "but I will not believe that he would be guilty of an act of deliberate unkindness *to me:* no, he could not mean to insult me."

The fagots blazed, and the coals were kindled; but no tickets were among them to add to the conflagration. Mrs. Podd, the morning after she had thrown them there, unseen by any body, stole into the room, and on her knees she stooped over the grate, and with her fingers poked among the combustibles until she rescued the object of her search: she then wiped them clean with the corner of her apron, wrapped them up carefully, and deposited them in her pocket. The good old woman now found herself in a very puzzling predicament: after talking to the young ladies so decidedly about the impossibility of doing such a thing, she had taken the greatest fancy for going and *seeing the worst.* She was ashamed to confess this to any body; and how to manage the performance of so dissipated an act as going to a playhouse two miles off without the knowledge of her Mapleton friends, was what baffled her ingenuity. As the day of performance

drew near, she grew unusually fidgety; and from the eternal *pat-pat* of the shoe, it became evident to Kate that its wearer was in perpetual motion; she therefore sought her out, really fearing that this restlessness of body betrayed disquietude of mind.

"I am afraid you are ill," said she.

"Ill! what should I be ill about?—never was better in my life."

"I am glad to hear it, dear nurse," replied Kate, intending to make no further remark on the subject.

"Well, but what should make you think I was ill, I wonder! I hate to be thought ill when I'm perfectly well. Do I leave any thing undone that I've been accustomed to attend to? or do I look more abominable than I used to do?"

"My dear Mrs. Podd," said Kate, "I am sorry if you are offended; but, spite of your displeasure, I must now say that I'm sure you are not well. When any body so good-tempered as yourself becomes irritable about trifles, illness is always the cause."

"Irritable!—am I?—Yes, I know I'm changed; and I'm sure if I'm cross to you, I must be a very bad old woman.—I *am* a very bad old woman: you have enough to worry you now, I'm sure."

"I really was only anxious about your health: do you feel quite well?"

"Quite; and—and if *you* won't tell any body, I'll tell *you* what has fussed me, and made me restless, just as children are when they want to be allowed to go and see a puppet-show and don't quite like to go and ask leave."

"Well, go on," said Kate; "I'll keep your important secret."

"You'll think it very odd, but—but, after all, I *do* want to go to that play to-morrow night."

"*You!* do I understand you?—*you* want to go?"

"Yes, Miss Kate," replied Mrs. Podd, looking down on the ground, and fidgeting with her fingers, just like a child in the predicament she had described.

"Well, of course, if you wish it, my father, I am sure, would have no objection; indeed I will take it on myself to give you permission. But how unlucky you did not say so before the tickets were destroyed!"

Mrs. Podd *almost* blushed as she took from her pocket the paper that contained them.

"Upon my word, I think you and I must change characters," said Kate with a melancholy smile. "*You* shall be the giddy girl, and *I* the stay-at-home matron."

"Don't make sport of me, Kate, and don't look at me in that sad sort of smiling way, for I can't bear it; 'tis so unlike the way you used to smile. The crying face which I've now and then seen you have after saying a bad lesson was not near so melancholy as that smile."

"Do not talk to me thus if you mean me to smile at all," said Kate: "take the ticket you intend to use, and give me the rest. No one will know of your absence but Jane and myself: I'm sure I wish you a pleasant evening."

"Pleasant! do you really suppose, Kate, I go there for pleasure? I don't know why I go,—I want to see him do that which I hate him for doing!—yet I must go."

"I do not think your going unnatural, nurse; you wish to see him *once* again, and you know it is not now probable that we shall ever meet him *here*."

"True,—that is it,—I suppose: I am an old fool; but don't let people know how foolish I am."

"I will sit up for you myself," said Kate.

"Oh, thank you; and then, you know, I can tell you all about it,—that is—shall I?"

"Not one word,—promise me that; and let us now agree never to name him."

"Never?"

"Dear nurse, *never;*—that is, not till you have some intelligence to communicate of vital import to himself,—his success in life, his—his marriage; or—or—should any thing happen to him, let me feel certain that I shall be told by you. But, for *my* sake, never allude to the past."

"I promise," replied the old woman, shaking her head and turning up her eyes most piteously. And we have now said enough to explain how it came to pass that on the night of Mr. Middleton's benefit, old Mrs. Podd, in her worst bonnet, wrapped up in an old cloak, and without any companion, was seated in the centre of the pit.

Every honied word uttered by the lovers in that most exquisite play was gall and worm-wood to her heart. But that was not the worst; for, sitting where she did, surrounded by strangers, and those of not very refined delicacy, she heard all the scandalous rumours of Danesford respecting the young couple before her,—facts being, as is usual, so mingled with exaggeration, that George's conduct was not only painted in darker colours than it deserved, but cruel imputations, utterly unfounded, were cast upon the innocent and beautiful *débutante.* Mrs. Podd had no opportunity of sifting the remarks of her garrulous neighbours, taking what was truth, and rejecting what was falsehood. She therefore listened until the gray hairs on her head, by erecting themselves, threatened to dislodge her bonnet; and when the curtain again rose, and the culprits again stood before her, instead of joining in the applause of those

around her, she could have hissed them with all the angry venom of a serpent, or hurled at them oranges from the basket of the fruit-woman who stood near.

But Mrs. Podd retained sufficient presence of mind to avoid the commission of any rash, outrageous act. Before the conclusion of the tragedy, she bustled out of her place, unable to bear it one moment longer, and, squeezing herself over the laps of her neighbours, treading with her high shoe on many of their toes, she at last got out of the theatre and walked towards the quiet home of the Leslies.

Kate let her in: the old woman threw her arms round the girl's neck and burst into tears, and, without exchanging one word, they separated for the night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

I'll not believe Love's wreath will pain
The hands that weave it!
That when no summer flowers remain,
Love's wreath becomes a galling chain!
—I'll not believe it.

I'll not believe man wins a heart
To wound and grieve it!
That when sad tears unbidden start,
The once fond lover will depart!
—I'll not believe it.

No sounds had reached George Hanson's ear but those of flattery and adulation; and when the play was over, a few of his gay associates met at his lodgings to drink champagne and "talk it all over."

The extraordinary beauty of Mary Middleton was praised again and again; and the good fortune of an admirer who was so evidently admired was proclaimed over sparkling bumpers which George failed not to pledge.

Never yet thwarted from his very boyhood in a single desire, was George Hanson now to be controlled by the poor Rector of Mapleton? No: the unanimous decision of his associates was against such undue obedience on his part, and such presumptuous interference on the part of Mr. Leslie. Was he, then, to marry Mary Middleton, in opposition to the schoolmaster's wishes? No: they talked in a far different strain; and George dared not, at least in their presence, indulge even in a dream of such honourable intentions.

To what abyss, then, were mere casual companions, aided by his own selfish indulgence of every wild wish, leading him? He knew not, he cared not; he drove thought from him, as he had ever done when reflection became irksome. Thus far he had gone without premeditated evil: his abandonment of old friends, his dissipation with new associates—his neglect of one to whom he had appeared devoted, and his sudden devotion to another, were all the acts of a youth accustomed to yield to every new impulse. *We*, who can only detail facts, and who have not the power of bringing in extenuation what are indescribable; the quick feelings, the warm affections, the wish to please, the ready smile when he had the power of gratifying others, the ready tear when he was conscious of having given offence;—*we* may appear too lenient to his errors. But to know such a boy, and see in his noble nature every latent seed of kindness and goodness, and yet to know that all has been perverted—ruined by indulgence, (or rather by *self-indulgence* in the parent, which has led to neglect of the child:) this indeed is terrible; and when the natural good qualities of the youth have won our best affections, may we not mourn—ay, may we not "sit down and weep," when we see the fair garden overrun with rank weeds, and know that their poisonous exhalations must in a very short period exterminate every pure flower that once promised to adorn it!

"Come, Hanthon, my boy, another glath!" cried Mr. Skinflint, who on this evening had wished to play what he called "*Mercuthio.*" But that part having been rescued by the good sense of old Middleton, and put into the hands of a *real* actor, he had represented "Count dy *Parith*;"—"Another bumper to the health of the incomparable Mary."

The glasses were all replenished, and, as is the custom among such revellers, the name of a pure and beautiful girl was bandied from lip to lip, as an excuse for further indulgence in wine, when infinitely too much had been drunk already.

"Why, George, my good fellow," said one, draining his glass, "we shall never see you now: I suppose you will hang out for ever at old Middleton's lodgings."

"Indeed I shall do no such thing," replied Hanson: "that will be forbidden ground to me after to-morrow."

"After to-morrow! why so?" inquired Fancourt.

"Because Middleton is going to London: he is to act at one of the great London theatres, and if successfully, he will be engaged there."

"Very likely; but what has that to do with your not being admitted at his lodgings?"

"Come, tell uth all about it."

"Oh, merely that the old man has made it a point with me that his daughter will receive no visits during his absence."

"Excellent! the cheese is to be left on the shelf, but the mouse is desired not to touch it!" said one of George's new friends.

"Oh, that abthurd old Mithter Middleton!" cried Skinflint, laughing.

"But, I say, Skinflint!" replied the other; "what will the mouse do when the cat's away?"

"Oh, the poor innothent mouthe! only look at him!"

"Really," said George, "this nonsense is all very well among ourselves; but it must not go further: Miss Middleton's name is not to be trifled with."

"Certainly not," replied Fancourt; adding in a whisper, "By-and-by we'll talk the matter over; for

if Middleton is really going to the metropolis, you ought, as that fellow hinted, to——"

"Hush!" replied George: "they will soon leave us; more of that when they are gone."

The revellers soon departed, and in the gray dawn of a fine spring morning, George Hanson was left in his apartments with a heated brain, and no better Mentor by his side than the Honourable Fitzville Fancourt,—dizzy with flattery and applause, with temptation thrown in his path, and, spite of many natural good qualities, with no steady principles, and no proper sense of religion to restrain him.

There are few men who cannot remember being at some period of early life associated with some gay unprincipled companion like Mr. Fancourt, whose manners were sufficiently attractive to gloss over, for a short period, the errors which in one less polished would have been disgusting. The most innocent may for a moment be dazzled; but the maxims of good parents will not be forgotten—the high principles early inculcated will assert their due influence, and the profligate associate will be tolerated with reluctance, while his power of doing injury will be neutralised. But, in such hands, what can we hope for the youth whose remembrance of a mother is coupled with no maxim of morality, and no precept of religion? Idleness, ignorance, and self-indulgence, form the soil in which, when the seeds of vice are sown, a rank abundant harvest must arise.

A rake from his very boyhood, and an adept in every petty dissipation which Danesford could offer, he listened with delight to the details of a metropolitan career from one who seemed to know its most secret haunts. The idea of marrying *any one* at his early age was spoken of with ridicule, not on account of the imprudence of early marriages, but because

matrimony was an inconvenient incumbrance to a youth of spirit: but marrying an unknown, poor, provincial actress, no matter what might be her beauty or her worth, or to what degree her affections might have been already won by assiduous attentions, was an absurdity not for a moment to be contemplated.

Ere the two friends separated, the hardened libertine had startled even George with his suggestions.

Let no parent accuse Mr. Middleton of culpable neglect in leaving an only daughter unprotected in his lodgings at Danesford while he went to attend to the duties of his profession in London. The rich man with ease could avoid doing so; but the actor could neither afford to take his child with him, nor to place her under female protection during his absence. He felt implicit confidence in the rectitude of her conduct, and left her without anxiety about her welfare, certain that until his return even her accepted lover would not gain admission under his roof.

Women of a higher rank are guarded by a hundred delicate refinements and observances unattainable by the poor. The male protector, the carriage, or the servant, is ever within call; they are never left unguarded, and they are blamed if they stir without attendance. With all these incalculable advantages, such women have fallen victims to the persevering ingenuity of a lover. But the country actress, ere distinction in her profession has given her wealth and consequence, may be left a lonely lodger in some disreputable neighbourhood: if no father or brother be at hand, has *she* servants to attend her to the theatre,—has she a carriage to convey her home at hours which are necessarily late? If such women do fall, let us remember only their trials and temptations, and turn with greater admiration to those so situated

who have passed the ordeal without even incurring suspicion!

Mr. Middleton was gone; and when George Hanson presented himself at the door of his lodgings to inquire after Mary, the woman of the house, obedient to the instructions given her, stated that Mary was well and grateful for his attention, but that until her father's return she must decline receiving his visits.

Opposition never yet deterred George from attempting the attainment of any desired object; he persisted in calling, and was always courteously repulsed with the same excuse. Mr. Fancourt was astonished at what he called the persevering prudery of the little actress; but he assured George of his conviction that it was all artifice, to entangle him more closely in her toils, and inveigle him into matrimony on her father's return.

"It is the way with them all!" said he: "the father is an old stager, and this demure seclusion of the girl during his absence is a mere stage-trick."

"By heavens!" cried George, "I have not seen her for three days, and I swear to you I love her even better than I was aware of."

"Just the object Miss Middleton had in view! She knew that barring the door against you, would only make you the more anxious to climb in at the window."

"And in at the window I must climb if I can obtain admission in no other way."

"No, no, I bar *that:* there'll be a devil of a row to very little purpose. They'll send for the police, and we may be vastly annoyed."

"When I talk of entering the window by force, I protest it is with no evil intent; I only want to see

her,—in fact, to assure myself that she really loves me."

"Love you! to be sure she does, to desperation;—she would run away with you to-morrow."

"You are very much mistaken, Fancourt; she would do no such thing."

"Wouldn't she?" replied Fancourt. "Well, then, it would be a great charity to make her happy against her will. I think I'll run away with her myself;—you'll wait shilly-shally till old Middleton's return."

"You are jesting, I know," said George; "but you must not jest on such a subject. What would you have me do?—I must obtain an interview with her."

"And so you shall;—that is, if you'll leave it all to me. When is old Sock-and-buskin expected home again?"

"In five days."

"In three I promise you an interview. We will take an early dinner together on Friday, and that evening you shall meet her again."

On the evening of the day on which this conversation occurred, old Mrs. Hawley, Mr. Middleton's landlady, had the honour of drinking tea with Mr. Silverthorn, Mr. Fancourt's confidential valet.

Mrs. Hawley was in every sense of the word an old actress;—born, not actually on the stage, but one night after her mother had performed Little Pickle, sung three songs, and danced a hornpipe! She was, as soon as she could toddle, led in as a young prince to be murdered, or a babe in a wood; and then, at four years of age, she used to hang in the air at the end of a wire, in imitated nakedness, with a blue gause tunic, doing an angel or a fairy. When scarce in her teens, she did tragedy, comedy, opera,

and farce, all *equally well;* and she continued this profuse exhibition of her talents until, at the ripe age of sixty, going down a trap-door one night as one of the furies, she was precipitated to the earth and incapacitated for further theatrical exertion. Being no longer able to act herself, she then let lodgings to actors and actresses;—she sold oranges and ginger-pop in the theatre, and was generally considered a very good sort of motherly woman.

With Mrs. Hawley, Mr. Middleton and his daughter, held no communication beyond the common civilities which pass at street-doors, or on staircases between lodging-house keepers and lodgers, when the former are tolerably obliging and honest, and the latter quiet and unobjectionable. The idea of leaving Miss Middleton under the care of the woman of the house never entered the old man's thoughts. When Mr. Hanson or any other visiters called, she was told what reason to give for the young lady's declining to receive them; but had Mary been the sole inhabitant of the house, he would have thought her as safe as in the lodgings of Mrs. Hawley. We may also add, that, holding no intercourse with her, he considered his daughter as safe and independent in her house as she would have been in a house of his own.

There was nothing remarkable in a woman of Mrs. Hawley's habits and character drinking, first her tea, and then her brandy-and-water, with Mr. Silverthorn; but that a woman of her age should have been sought out to enjoy such an indulgence was surprising.

Protracted and confidential was their *tête-à-tête;* and when she was thoroughly in her cups (of tea or something else), the valet ventured to hint certain schemes, which elicited from her chaste lips most

violent objections. But conditions were then named —bribes were offered; and when the iniquitous pair separated that night, a thoroughly good understanding (or rather an abominably bad one,) existed between them.

Hanson, by the advice of his friend Mr. Fancourt, discontinued his calls; but Mrs. Hawley, for reasons best known to herself, contrived to let Mary understand that the poor young gentleman who had called so often was dangerously ill, and confined to his bed. She, however, daily laid upon the table of Mary's little sitting-room a beautiful bouquet, with Mr. George Hanson's kind regards. Was it not natural that she should cherish her flowers with the fondest care?—and having acknowledged her affection for him, could she do less than weep when she heard of his illness?

CHAPTER XIX.

Write on the sand when the tide is low,
Seek the spot when the waters flow;
Whisper a name when the storm is heard,
Pause that echo may catch the word:
If what you wrote on the sand should last,
If echo is heard 'mid the tempest's blast,—
Then believe, and not *till then*,
There is truth in the vows of men!

Throw a rose on the stream at morn,
Watch at eve for the flower's return;
Drop in the ocean a golden grain,
Hope 'twill shine on the shore again:
If the rose you again behold,
If you gaze on your grain of gold,—
Then believe, and not *till then*,
There is truth in the vows of men!

MR. MIDDLETON'S *début* in London was highly suc-
ssful, and he returned that night to his hotel with
e plaudits of a crowded audience ringing in his
rs.

"At least," thought the old man, "Mr. Hanson
ll not now be the son-in-law of an obscure country
tor! Such as my profession is, I have attained
inence in it; nor shall I be beholden to him for
y daily bread."

"The next morning he wrote a letter to his daugh-
, full of exultation at his success, and saying that,
er one more performance, having finally arranged
engagement with the manager, he should return
Danesford on the following Tuesday.

But Mary received no letter; and, in addition to

her anxiety about her lover's health, she now began to dread that some accident had befallen her father. She had determined not to quit the house during his absence, for had she met George, how could she have prevented his joining her? She therefore paced her small apartment, too much agitated and too anxious to read, or employ herself in any of her usual occupations.

It was on Saturday that her father's letter ought to have reached her: he had named that as the day on which she would hear from him; and, aware of his usual regularity, her heart sank within her when, having heard the postman at the door, she called to her landlady to ask if he had brought her a letter, and was informed that Mrs. Hawley herself was the only person who had received one.

Mary could not account for her father's silence; nor had she the common consolation or the common vent for the ill-humour of a disappointed correspondent. She could not scold him for his apparent negligence, for she knew not where to address a letter for him. With a heavy heart she arranged her fresh flowers in a vase on her table, and repeated to herself her favourite scenes in "Romeo and Juliet." Alas! poor girl! if others were plotting against thee, most unconsciously wert thou removing from thy fond heart its few and frail defences.

Sunday brought no letter; and knowing that on the following day there was no post from London, her anxiety became intense. To whom could she apply for advice? Her thoughts flew to George Hanson: but she had promised her father that she would hold no intercourse with him, and at last she made up her mind to wait for Tuesday's post. If she then received no intelligence from her parent, she felt that she should be justified in confiding her

apprehensions to the man whose addresses that parent had sanctioned, and to take such steps as his better judgment and knowledge of the world might suggest.

How dreadful is anxiety about the fate of an absent friend, when the lonely hours of a long day are passed in the dwelling which the presence of that friend has often rendered cheerful! The vacant chair, the desk laid aside, or the closed volume, all give to the chamber an air of desolation.

Mary rose on Monday after a sleepless night, and heavy indeed was her heart when she entered her sitting-room at reflecting that a day and a night must pass ere a letter could reach her. But though she could expect no letter, was it not possible that intelligence might arrive through some other channel, —that her father himself might return, or be brought back to her suffering from some accident?

Let no one think such terrors are exaggerated: to those who are unaccustomed to be separated, parting ever brings a dread of something that we dare not scrutinise; and when the expected letter comes not, the firmest nerves will tremble.

Every carriage that passed through the street that day attracted her to the window; every knock at the door startled, and made her run and open her door and listen. Towards evening her alarm increased; and when Mrs. Hawley entered her room to beg she would not "give way," but take a bit of something for her dinner, she declared she could not eat, and requested to be left alone. Again she paced her narrow apartment; and taking an early moss-rose from her bouquet, she gazed on it, as if from thence she expected comfort.

"Surely," thought she, "were there any bad news to communicate about himself, my father, to spare

me a shock, would write to Mr. Hanson, or cause him to be written to, that he might break it to me gently. Nothing serious *can* be the matter; and yet—why no letter!"

The dark hours were again coming on,—those hours so dreaded by the anxious! While daylight lasts, there are sounds in the street; and though to look forth from the window has brought us disappointment again and again, still we *can* gratify our eager curiosity: and there is some relief even in the impulse of expectation, though at each failure we sink back into deeper gloom. But night had now closed in; and by the light of one small candle, Mary Middleton still walked up and down the room, or paused to listen to some distant sound.

There was a loud knock; she started, and for a moment was unable to move: but, hearing the door opened and voices in the passage, she rushed to the top of the small staircase and eagerly listened.

"I will speak to the young lady myself," said Mrs. Hawley; and Mary heard the landlady ascending the stairs.

It was *not* her father, then; but Mrs. Hawley had evidently something to communicate, she should now know the worst; and as these thoughts rapidly passed through her mind, her strength forsook her, and, like a coward, she shrank back into the room, sank down in a chair, and dreaded the approach of the woman. All that long day she had watched and prayed for intelligence of her father; yet now she would have given worlds to have been permitted to rest without information, save that which she might receive the next morning in a letter written by his own dear hand!

Mrs. Hawley entered the apartment with a demure countenance and a courtesy, but seemed in

some confusion, as if uncertain how she should word the communication which she intended to make. Mary sat motionless, with her eyes fixed on her, and could not articulate a word.

"Don't be frightened, Miss," said the landlady.

"My father! tell me the worst," Mary at length murmured.

"I'm sure I'd do any thing for you, Miss."

"Tell me the truth!"

"The truth!" replied the woman.

"I assure you," said Mary, starting up, and taking the landlady's two hands in her own,—"I assure you I can bear it: any thing is better than suspense. Have you heard of him?"

"*I*, Miss! No; but——"

"Somebody *has* heard, then,—probably Mr. Hanson. I entreat you to tell me, or to get me the information instantly."

"Oh, if you would but *see* Mr. Hanson, Miss, all might be well!"

"See him! certainly—any body: but perhaps *you* know—has any thing happened?"

"I fear there *is* something wrong."

"You are desired to conceal the truth from me,—I see it."

"*I* conceal the truth!" stammered the woman.

"Then there is no alternative," exclaimed Mary; "I must see Mr. Hanson,—I should be wrong now to hesitate; but he is ill—unable to come here."

"There is a person below who will take you to him."

"Let me go at once, then," cried Mary, hurrying towards the door.

"You were forgetting your bonnet and shawl," said Mrs. Hawley, following and assisting her to put them on.

"True!" said Mary; "you are right—thank you." With rapid steps she walked from the house by the side of a man whose face she had not seen: another followed close behind her.

"I know not whither I am going," said she: "you must direct me."

"Mr. Hanson is expecting you, madam," replied a voice unknown to her.

After passing through two or three streets, dark as the night was, she knew that they had left the houses, for she heard the breeze murmuring through the young leaves of the trees. In an instant a powerful arm encircled her waist and raised her from the ground; she was hurried into a carriage, the door was closed, and as it whirled rapidly away, she heard the voice of George Hanson and fell senseless in his arms.

CHAPTER XX.

"Be comforted!"
  You say with kind intent;
Nor would *I* shed
Tears for the *dead*,
  The *pure*, the innocent!
But am I wrong
  In being thus subdued,
Whose love most strong,
And tried so long,
  Met base ingratitude?
Could sorrow kill,
  You would not see me here:
But, 'gainst my will,
I linger still,
  With none my path to cheer.

GAYLY beamed the morning sun on the tranquil village of Mapleton; and Kate Leslie, as she sat at work at one of the open windows of the Rectory, looked forth on the budding flowers and trees, listened to the songs of the birds, and felt her sad heart relieved from some of its depression.

"'Tis wicked to repine," thought she, "while surrounded by so much that I ought to be most grateful for! a tranquil happy home, a father, sister, friends who love me; and shall I be dissatisfied because *one* hope—one, too, that I was wrong to indulge, has ended in disappointment? No! I will not pain the hearts of those around me by wearing a face of gloom: I have been foolish, culpable; oh God, forgive and strengthen me!"

"Come, Kate!" cried Jane, entering the room pre-

pared for a walk; "I am going to walk with my father,—will you come with us?"

"I am busy," replied Kate; "but where are you going?"

"Your favourite walk, the path by the rivulet."

"No, not there: you will find me here when you return."

"Why, it used to be your favourite walk!"

"So it was, Jane," said Kate with a slight sigh; but looking up cheerfully, she added, "and so it shall be again; but I want to finish what I am about."

Through the green tendrils that shaded her window, Kate soon saw her father pass down the little garden leaning on Jane's arm: she watched them until they were concealed by the trees, and then she resumed her work.

"Why does my father always look to Jane for support," thought Kate, "instead of me, his eldest girl? why, but because he has been more accustomed to find her ready when he wanted assistance! I have been devoting my thoughts, my affections, to another; and well do I deserve the mortification which my own folly has occasioned! Even now, I think of him too much. Is it a crime to think of him? No! for I have driven from my heart every selfish feeling of love or of resentment; and surely to be anxious for the reformation—nay, for the salvation—of one who was once so dear to us all, cannot be criminal. Oh! if hereafter I may but hear of his welfare, of his respectability, I shall be content. And I *shall* live to hear it! the natural good qualities of his heart cannot be wholly perverted. I have myself been in error; but I will atone for the past, as George will one day do,—I will be a more devoted daughter!" And with this reflection Kate rose and laid aside her work, with the intention of following her father and her sister.

With more cheerfulness than she had felt for many weeks, she ran to her room to prepare herself for her ramble; when having done so, in closing a drawer, the neglected play-tickets, and several trifling presents given her by George in days gone by, caught her attention, and gathering them together, she brought them back with her into the drawing-room, with the intention of folding them up carefully and putting them by in her own little desk.

"I do not wish to see them daily," thought she,—"it is better that I should not: but there can be no harm in preserving them, and hereafter there will be no harm, no danger, in beholding them. Poor fellow! were every young man to have his boyish vows of love remembered and quoted as proofs of ingratitude and want of feeling, who would escape censure? 'Tis *I*, too, alone have been to blame; I forgive him—nay, I have nothing to forgive. Poor George! he will prosper yet; he will be good, and he will be happy!"

She laid her little treasures on the table, wiped away a few weak tears, and proceeded to open her desk. At that moment she heard a noise in the passage below; a loud and angry voice inquiring for her father, and Mrs. Podd, first with civility, and then passionately, declaring that he was not at home.

Kate ran to the stair-head to inquire whether, if the gentleman's business was urgent, she could be of any use in her father's absence; and at the same moment, with a vehement declaration that he would not leave the house till Mr. Leslie's return, the stranger ascended the stairs and entered the room.

He was a man of about sixty years of age, stoutly made, and of a florid complexion. His whole frame shook with violent agitation, his dress was disordered, his eyes wild and bloodshot, and his gray hair

uncombed hung scantily around his high bald forehead. His right hand grasped a large stick, on which he leaned for support: but so insufficient was it in his present exhausted state, that, on entering the apartment, he sank back against the wall, and stared at Kate for a moment with a wild unmeaning glare, which she could not but attribute to madness. Much alarmed, Kate stood before him undecided what she ought to do: at length, with a faltering voice, she inquired whether she could be of any use to him.

"*Her* form! *her* height—and a voice almost as sweet!" exclaimed the old man; "but not like Mary! oh, no, no!"

"You seem agitated, sir: what can I offer you?"

"Only tell me, is he here? put him into my power, the dastard!"

"I fear, sir, you are ill: I can be of no use."

"Pardon me, I know not what I say,—but I am a wretched father, and you must forgive me!—Is he here?"

"If your child is a pupil of my father's, I can assure you that all are well," said Kate.

"A pupil of *your* father's! not for the world should child of mine be pupil to your father, if you be Mr. Leslie's daughter! I never knew but one of his pupils; and he is a scoundrel—a mean unprincipled scoundrel! a liar! a thief—the worst of thieves!—Is he here?"

"I really know not what you mean, nor who you are, sir," said Kate, recalled to her self-possession by the old man's violence, which alarmed her less than the maniac gaze with which he had at first silently regarded her.

"You know me not? true—I will tell you who I am," replied he. "I am an actor, and my name is Middleton."

"Middleton!" exclaimed Kate; and overcome by terror, she sank into a chair.

"You have heard that name before, it seems?"

"I have, sir."

"Most creditable, truly! under the roof of a clergyman the pupil was permitted to boast of his intrigues!"

"Sir, you wrong my father, and you forget what is due to me, when you speak thus; but in your present state of excitement I can forgive any thing. Pray sit down, and for God's sake tell me what has happened!"

"Is it possible you do not know? It *may* be. But answer me one question—Is the villain here?"

"You have not named him," said Kate, trembling; and dreading his reply.

"Hanson—George Hanson!" replied the old man between his teeth, hatred and revenge glaring in every feature.

"He—is—not here."

"Not here! But how am I to believe you?"

"Most solemnly do I declare to you he is not here; nor have we seen him here for many weeks.

"Oh God! what am I to do!" cried Middleton, beating his forehead with his clenched fist. "Mary! my child, lost, lost! and where am I to seek thee!"

Kate rose from her seat and firmly and deliberately walked towards him; with both her hands she grasped one of his, and pressing it, she said in a low voice, "you have not told me what has happened; do not deem me unfeeling when I ask you to tell me all, for—for I would wish to hear it while we are alone: it concerns your daughter!"

"You know it, then?"

"We have long suspected his attachment, and it was that which estranged him from us; my father

could not sanction the marriage; but when opposition is fruitless, he will not withhold his pardon. If they *are* married," she whispered, turning deadly pale, "tell me at once, tell me while no one is by; it is better I should know it at once."

"Married!" replied the agonised father,—"married! oh, no, there has been no marriage! why not wait for my return had he meant to marry her?"

"What—what then?"

"I see you did *not* know—the seducer is *not* here."

Kate, with a wild cry, utterly unconscious of the action, threw her arms round the old actor's neck and fell insensible on his breast.

In the heaviest afflictions, the unexpected necessity of affording help or comfort to another will rouse us from our apathy, and Mr. Middleton, who was but a moment before engrossed by his own anguish, now exerted himself to restore the girl who so unexpectedly sympathised with him in his distress.

Mrs. Podd soon appeared with restoratives, and it was not long before Kate opened her eyes and with a convulsive sob looked round upon her two assiduous attendants. She extended her hand to Mr. Middleton, who pressed it with kindness.

"Forgive me," she said faintly: "at such a moment I would not for the world have troubled you. I could have borne any thing but this!—his marriage with your daughter—oh, I would have prayed for blessings on them both! But his guilt! an outrage on the laws of God and man! I cannot bear it!"

"*You*, then, had been deserted when he first sought Mary! Oh, had I known that!"

"Tell me," cried Kate, starting up, "can nothing now be done? is it too late? may they not be found? He would hear reason, I think he would, *from me*, and I will urge his marriage with all the little in-

fluence I possess: oh, to bring that about, I would sacrifice my life!"

"You'd not prevail with one so base and selfish."

"I should *not* despair, had I the opportunity of making the attempt. You know not his early disadvantages, his mother's selfish folly: oh, had she taught him there was a God, he would have obeyed God's commandments!"

"Even could your words prevail," replied Mr. Middleton, "we know not where to seek him."

"When did they go?"

"On Monday evening."

"Oh, George!" cried Kate, passionately clasping her hands, "why did my poor father forbid your return! Had you prayed with us, as you used to do, on that fatal night, you would not have gone forth to commit such a crime!"

"They have been absent fifteen hours, and of course every precaution has been adopted to elude pursuit."

"True," replied Kate, sitting down the image of despair, "I am helpless, hopeless, and I cannot aid you."

"*You* should rejoice rather than lament," said the old man; "you have perchance escaped a snare. Think of *my* child, a girl young, pure, happy as yourself! think of her fate—an outcast—scorned—degraded—the mistress of a wretch who cannot love her, and who will ere long spurn her from him!" He covered his face with his hands and wept.

"It is true!" said Kate: "had I been unprotected, such might have been *my* fate! My God, I thank thee!—left to my own guidance, I had been weak indeed!" And she fell upon her knees and poured forth her silent thanksgivings.

As soon as Kate no longer required her services,

Mrs. Podd, light of foot but heavy of heart, had hurried along the path by the rivulet, to summon Mr. Leslie and to tell the disgraceful story. The schoolmaster was overpowered—paralysed by the intelligence, and uttering incoherent exclamations, he hastened to the house. Kate rose at their entrance and embraced her sister; but Mr. Middleton, his hands still covering his face, sat motionless.

In vain they tried to rouse him from his insensibility. But Kate, who bathed his wrinkled forehead and pressed her finger on his pulse, declared he was not dead; and with some difficulty a person was found who rode off at speed to Danesford to summon medical assistance.

For hours Kate watched indefatigably by his side —by him who was the father of the girl for whom her first and only lover had deserted her! "He has no child to nurse him now," thought she: "I will take the vacant place."

After being bled profusely, animation slowly returned; but he lay upon a bed at the Rectory unconscious where he was, and addressing his gentle and assiduous attendant as if she had indeed been Mary.

For many weeks it was found impossible to subdue the brain-fever with which he had been attacked; and when at length it gradually abated, health in some degree returned to the body, but not sense to the mind. He still talked to Kate as if she had been his Mary, and seemed utterly unconscious of his misfortune.

If mental alienation can ever be regarded without horror, it is when it veils from the unfortunate the nature and extent of their misfortune.

Who that saw the old man smiling on Kate Leslie, and calling her his darling, could wish to raise the

veil, and show him that he had been nursed by a stranger, while his own poor child had been the forced paramour of a ruffian!

Mr. Leslie never recovered the shock, his already shattered nerves became daily weaker, and when at length Mr. Middleton was removed from the Rectory to an asylum in the neighbourhood, Kate, released from her attendance on one sick bed, was summoned to another.

In a country town, so daring and lawless an act as that which George Hanson had committed was long and loudly censured, and there were not wanting many who threw the blame on Mr. Leslie's laxity of discipline.

The culprit in some measure escaped the imputation of a forcible abduction, for several persons were ready to swear that they had heard Miss Middleton ask those about her to take her to Mr. Hanson: and thus over her innocent intentions a foul stain of imputed guilt had been cast.

Such was the devastation George Hanson spread around him when he committed an act which compromised his own happiness!

CHAPTER XXI.

She never blamed him—never!
  But received him when he came
With a welcome kind as ever,
  And she *tried* to look the same.
But vainly she dissembled;
  For whene'er she tried to smile,
A tear unbidden trembled
  In her blue eye all the while.

WELL perhaps had it been for Mary Middleton had she, like her father, remained unconscious of her situation. But after a brief cessation of sense, she began to revive, and the first sounds that broke upon her ear were words of endearment from him who had professed to be her friend, and who had proved her betrayer.

Wildly she shrank from him, and receded into the corner of the carriage, burying her face in her hands, and sobbing with the abandonment of a child deprived of what it most loved. But suddenly she started and seemed to rouse herself; and then, after looking wildly round her, she cast herself on her knees before George Hanson, prostrate on the rough rug which lay at the foot of the hired carriage, and looking imploringly in his face, she cried, "My father! tell me of my father!—if you are a man, deceive me not in this!"

"He is well, dearest Mary," said George, embracing her, though she shrank from him with dismay. "You need not be under the slightest apprehension about your father."

"How know you that?" said Mary.

"I—I *do* know it, no matter how."

"Has any letter been received from him?"

"Yes: he is well."

"Then that letter was addressed to me!"

George was silent, but endeavoured to renew his endearments.

"That letter was intercepted!" exclaimed Mary; and she fell at the bottom of the carriage like a lifeless body.

George Hanson looked helplessly down on the ruin he had wrought, and tried in vain to raise her and restore animation. She seemed as one dead; and there were a few dreadful moments when he gazed on her white lips, and chafed her cold hands, uncertain whether he were a murderer. But on went the carriage, the horses again and again were changed, and day began to dawn. At length her rigid limbs seemed to relax, and George succeeded in placing her on the seat beside him: her eyes gradually opened, and with a convulsive shivering she turned and looked on her companion.

"It is, then, no dream!" she cried.

"You are with one who loves you," said George.

"Loves me!" she replied with a look of scorn: "and is it *thus* men prove their love?"

"Nay, Mary, say not so: I thought that you loved *me*."

"And so I did—and do—yes, even now—I will not deny it; and to save you from an error or from a degradation, I would have died. How have *you* proved your vaunted love for *me?* you have plunged me from peace and respectability into misery and disgrace!"

"How can you thus accuse me, Mary, when to promote your welfare will be the happiness of my life!"

"The happiness of your life, George Hanson! Ah, no! your life will be prolonged, and may perchance be happy, when I am cold in the grave. With the man who really loved me, I could look forward to an old age of tranquil happiness; but men show not true affection in a deed like this. You were determined to snatch me from my father's arms—you have done it—I am lost, I am helpless—I cannot retrace the step I have taken, and I know myself for life your slave—your slave, unless released by your desertion,—and *that*, I feel, I could not bear. Oh, George Hanson! is it *nothing* to possess the devoted love of a pure heart? I gave it you not unsought; and having wooed and won it, is it a thing to disregard? You are young, almost as young as myself; you cannot yet be hardened in sinful ways; and if I am your first love, George, as you are mine, oh, cast me not down from self-esteem, from your esteem, from hope, from comfort, from religion! I shall not dare to pray when I am guilty; I shall lose every virtue, every grace that won your admiration; and you will cease to love me, when you can no longer respect me. Think of the first innocent feelings of your first love, and cast bad wishes from your soul!"

George leaned back in the carriage, his right hand shading his eyes, and he *did* think of the innocent dawn of his first love, for, with a bitter pang, he thought of Kate Leslie, and remembered that between himself and one so innocent he had placed an insurmountable barrier. But such recollections boded no good to the poor fugitive who now sat by his side. She was *not* the first love of his heart; her beauty had charmed his fancy, while she shared with him the plaudits of a crowd, and eloquently answered the sweet impassioned language which he,

as her dramatic lover, had spoken with a tenderness so like reality, he had fancied himself exclusively attached to her. Most innocently had Mary been the cause of the estrangement between George and Kate Leslie; she was even ignorant of her rival's existence. But now George was driven by her distress to turn from the illusions of passion to the darker realities and inevitable results of the steps he had taken; and whilst his heart acknowledged that the being it really loved was far away and would learn to hate him when she heard his crime, he felt that he had united himself to one whose smiles and beauty had been to him her sole attractions; and as he beheld her anguish, he could not but reflect that it must be long before he could expect smiles or endearments from her: he had himself driven away the very charms which had allured him!

What, then, was to be his lot?—tears, reproaches, and perpetual gloom! George was not so hardened in guilt as to think of deserting her; he shrank from this vision of the future, and endeavoured to restore her to calmness, if not to cheerfulness.

"Nay, Mary," said he, "do not give way to sad thoughts. Think of all our mutual assurances of attachment: I have said that I love you, and do you doubt that I shall be kind to you?"

"I am unchanged, George," she replied; "but are *you* so? or *if* unchanged, are you what I supposed you, and what you endeavoured to appear? I thought you a friend: are you not a foe—a deadly foe, the worst—the most deceitful? For myself I care little now, for, having dispelled the illusion, were you to stab me at this moment, I should make small struggle for my life, for that life must be miserable: but my father—when I think of the poor old man, and know what he will suffer when he hears that his child is

taken away, and no marriage! Oh, sir, I shall go mad!—for my father's sake, make me your wife!"

"Dearest Mary," answered George, "why this agitation? why do you doubt my intentions? why——"

"Do not attempt to deceive me," interrupted Mary. "There was no opposition to our union, no obstacle whatever: alas! my poor father was only too proud—too happy to receive you. It is not for marriage that the poor actor's child is stolen away in his absence!"

"You know not what opposition my friends may have offered to our union."

"You would have spoken of their disapprobation: but still—it *may* be so—and I will try to believe it: but, oh, to-morrow—nay, this day—for this must be the dawn of morning which steals upon us—this day at the earliest hour such a rite can be performed; make me your wife, and rescue me from the degradation which must otherwise be my lot."

"We are on our way to Scotland, Mary," replied George, evading a distinct reply.

"To Scotland! Is it, then, your intention that we shall be united there? If so, write to my father at the first town we come to, and distinctly state that such is your design."

Where so desperate an act of duplicity has been practised, it is not to be supposed that George Hanson would hesitate to write a letter to Mr. Middleton, which was approved and partly dictated by his daughter, but, though she saw it sealed and directed, it never was forwarded to its supposed destination. They, however, proceeded on their way to Scotland, and the poor girl's mind was partially calmed by the promise of a marriage at Gretna Green.

But no blacksmith was engaged to unite the fugi-

tives. The Honourable Mr. Fitzville Fancourt had a shooting-lodge in the Highlands, and had most considerately offered it to his friend and pupil.

When Mary Middleton could no longer conceal from herself the humiliating truth, she sank into a state of spiritless, hopeless, uncomplaining apathy. She loved him; but it was as the spaniel clings to the foot that has spurned and the hand that has beaten it,—not as woman *can* love the being who appreciates and cherishes her.

She uttered no complaint, for she knew complaint would be useless; she asked for nothing, for she was aware that the only boon she craved, MARRIAGE, would, on some pretence, from time to time be denied her. There are some women so situated who are said to wean the affections of their false friends from them by incessant and wearying complaints. Such was not Mary; she "pined in thought."

'Tis true, she had no smiles to welcome him home, and no laugh, such as she had of old in her poor father's dwelling, to make glad the dwelling of her lover. But she did her best to please; and when he gave her a kind word or gentle look, (and after a brief period such words and looks were rare,) she shed grateful tears.

CHAPTER XXII.

Oh this world of ours,
  With the path that leads to death,
And the thinly scatter'd flow'rs,
  And the cold—cold ice beneath!
And the warm hearts we have met
  But to lose them and to mourn,
And the ever-sad regret
  For what never can return!
Oh this world of shame and sin,
  This weary world of ours!
The canker-worm is at work within
  The fairest of its flow'rs!

Think of earthly treasure
  As a thing that cannot last;
Judge of *future* pleasure
  By the false joy of the *past:*
Thou wilt learn how to disdain
  All that mortals covet most;
Slow to grasp what thou mayst gain,
  Slow to mourn what thou hast lost.
Oh this world of shame and sin,
  This weary world of ours!
The canker-worm is at work within
  The fairest of its flow'rs!

How rarely after the lapse of one brief year can we revisit a favourite scene and find all as we left it! The same woods and waters, the same dwellings, and perhaps the same dwellers, may be there; but shall we again behold the same happy faces? But extend the period of absence; say that *five* years have flown away; and then, if you have held no communication with the absent, with what anxious misgivings, what sad forebodings, will you retrace the path that leads you to their threshold!

Five years!—in the retrospect they are as nothing,

and to the youthful how little in anticipation! yet what changes may not five years bring! The child of ten, at fifteen will be the bold schoolboy, or the girl just ripening into the woman. Add five years to the age of the young bride, will the bridegroom still gaze on her with that fond smile? death may have snatched him from her, or some cold premeditated separation worse than that death causes; for both live, and two are miserable instead of one! Or say Time treads on flowers: still five years will have brought a change,—a thoughtful serious brow, the matron's step; but if, mingled with the laugh of loving children, she still hears the husband's voice of affection, happy indeed has been the past, and she has little cause to dread the future.

The old; those who in age have health and youthful spirits, who "*wear so well*" that they excite our wonder; five years *must* change them, and *may* snatch them from us.

Were we to sit calmly down, and deliberately make a list of all the changes and chances which the last five years have brought us, registering the names of those whom death has snatched away, or of those who have fallen from us, changed by their own prosperity, or scared by our adversity; chilling to our hearts would be the page that we had written.

But were it possible that any human hand could trace coming events; the dangers, the anxieties, the disappointments, and the losses of five future years; who could look upon that register and wish to live?

Five years may bring to the beauty the gray hair and the wrinkle! to love, indifference; to friendship alienation; to thoughtless mirth, lifeweariness and gloom; to blooming youth, decay; to green old age, infirmity.

Yet, returning to a place which we have only left for that seemingly brief period, how little do we an-

ticipate such changes, and how appalling is it to behold them!

Five years! None know better than ourselves the ruin that may be wrought in such a lapse of time!—the prospects of early life utterly blasted, and the falling off of the rabble we once reckoned on the list of our friends! The veil that hides the future from our eyes is indeed given in mercy: we have contended with—nay, we have surmounted difficulties which, had they been *foreseen*, must have crushed our health or our intellect!

But what is there in the retrospection? Contempt for the false; gratitude and deep love for the faithful; and for ourselves, EXPERIENCE, which perchance has made us wiser and better.

Five years have passed away since we last looked upon the tranquil Rectory of Mapleton; and, conscious of the many changes which may have taken place in that period, we linger in the green lane that leads down to the village, and pause to listen to some old familiar sounds. The church-clock is telling us the hours as it used to do when Kate and Jane Leslie were playful children, and George Hanson their innocent companion! That tinkling sheep-bell, how well do we know it!—and the bark of that dog, is it not the same we used to hear from this same spot, —one of the gay pupils' favourites keeping watch at Mr. Leslie's garden-gate?

Yes; the same sounds are here to welcome us, and they almost give us confidence to go forward with a certainty of finding all whom we used to value.

And does not every object that the eye rests upon remain unchanged? 'Tis again the early springtime, and the trees and flowers are preparing for their summer festival. There is the green bank, on which sat old Mrs. Podd when Mr. Ibbotson sur-

prised her in tears:—it is as green as ever! Who would suppose that five winters have in succession robbed it of primroses and covered it with snow! Not a violet is missing, not a blade of grass withered, to whisper a warning that we may find sad changes where we go!

We do not miss a tree in yonder copse; and if there *be* a change, 'tis one that tells of vigour, not decay; it is the growth of some young saplings, which now rise, proudly emulating the loftier boughs that used to shade us long ago.

The rivulet,—that bright perpetual babbler!—which must be regarded with intense interest by one who remembers that it is among the very few things which was seen by our ancestors wandering between its banks,—remains unchanged for us, and will, if unmolested, flow with the same brightness and the same melody for our children's children;—the rivulet still trickles through the valley, kissing the long tendrils of the willow-trees that droop to be saluted, and telling no tales of the lovers who within the last five years have rambled on the pathway by its side—fondly as George Hanson, confidingly as Kate Leslie!

Nothing as yet betokens change; and we will venture on towards the gate of the Rectory. There stands the unpretending mansion: the smoke rises from the chimney, telling of comfort and competence within; the walls are covered with their flowering creepers, and a casement is open, at which we almost fancy we can see a bright and cheerful face, smiling its welcome as of old. And, hark! it is no illusion;—far off, in the well-known play-ground, we hear the murmur of young voices, the shout of excitement, the merry laugh of joy! We will hesitate no longer; we will ring at the gate, and ask boldly for the Leslies.

CHAPTER XXIII.

We must follow where they lead!
We must follow them with speed
Upon that unknown path—from which
Once enter'd none recede!
We must follow those
Who now repose—
Too early snatched away,
And some who saw life's latest close
In age and in decay:
We must follow—we must follow—
For the ground we tread is hollow!
We must follow on the unknown path,—
How early—who shall say?

UNCHANGED indeed was the village of Mapleton; and the Rectory, the simple church, and the noisy play-ground, gave no indication of a lapse of years; but another rector went about doing good in the little hamlet, and another schoolmaster superintended the education of another race of boys. None bearing the name of Leslie were dwellers in that habitation; and he who wished to seek the former rector in his place of repose, was led to an unpretending tomb beneath the yew-tree in the churchyard. There, four years before, had he been laid in the cold grave, while his orphan children had wept in silence as they heard the earth fall heavily on his coffin.

There has always been to us something more than commonly painful in the death of a poor country clergyman whose income depended principally, if not wholly, on his very moderate stipend. If he was a husband and the father of a family, it was not pro-

bable that out of his small resources he could save much for that evil day when he should be snatched from his wife or children:—and if he could lay by nothing, or too little to produce an income for their support, how melancholy is the situation of his widow or his orphans!

The loss of one so dear must be sufficient to overpower them; but, in addition to their bereavement, how dreadful must it be, in the very hour of mourning, to go forth for ever from the dwelling endeared by old associations, giving up the favourite garden and the dear haunts of childhood to a stranger!—and this must be done when 'tis too probable that they lack the means to secure for themselves the home and the comforts to which, as gentlewomen, they have been accustomed.

In Mr. Leslie's case, however, the school had enabled him to lay by just sufficient to rescue his two girls from actual dependence. Their home, indeed, was now very different to that they had lived in from infancy, for it was one of the simple cottages of the village; but, good taste directing the willing hand of the rural carpenter, and a rich profusion of the gayest and the sweetest flowers, had rendered that humble dwelling an object which no wanderer was likely to pass without pausing to admire its unpretending beauty.

And there, four years after their father's death, we now find Kate and her sister Jane, living with one —shall we say servant? no—with one kind friend; and that friend was Mistress Podd.

The garb of mourning had long been thrown aside; and though the memory of their parent was fondly cherished by both, to the cheek of one at least of the fair girls had returned the rose of health and the expression of cheerfulness. But one was still pale, and

sad, and thoughtful; and mingled with her filial regrets was another grief, *of which she never spoke.*

Kate Leslie but once in her life had met with such a being as George Hanson. Circumstanced as she had been, living out of society, in a country village, she had never had an opportunity of comparing with him other young men of equal or of superior pretensions. To her there had been but one George Hanson in her little world; and to forget him, or the bright anticipations that were once connected with him, was impossible.

She was now left, without one relation and with few friends, sole guardian of her sister; who, though but one year younger, had ever been accustomed to look to her for advice and protection. As long as Mrs. Podd lived, she felt a sort of security in the old woman's presence and companionship: but, at her advanced age, she could not be expected long to remain with her; and indeed, were her life prolonged, infirmities might render her more an embarrassment than a comfort; and were she gone, or even bedridden, how lonely and unprotected would be their situation! both under five-and-twenty, and without resources to enable them to have servants to minister to their comfort or security.

"Could I see one of you married!" was Mrs. Podd's perpetual remark: but was it likely, in so secluded a village, without fortune or connexions, that they should find admirers?

It is no less true than strange, that the want of what the world calls "*opportunities*" very often does not prevent girls having what the same excellent world is pleased to denominate "*eligible offers.*"

We have seen actually "*beautiful and accomplished*" girls, in the best society, visiting every watering-place in its own particular season, and always

"*in town*" when operas and Almack's and drawing-rooms were at their zenith, yet who never married. They have sung, and they have danced, and they have flirted; but they have not found husbands. On the other hand, girls living in seclusion, with every disadvantage, meet with men who woo them, and win them, and love them, and cherish them! The truth is this: The beauty, with her accomplishments, goes to the fashionable market with a very high notion of her own value. In the first blush of her fashion, a titled or very wealthy partner is generally to be found. But a partner in a quadrille is not necessarily a partner for life; and years flit away, and the bloom fades, and she who began with titles is spoiled for such establishments as can be offered by the country squire or the clergyman. Long live such old maids! say we; they deserve their doom.

"Could I but see one of you married!" was still the burthen of old Podd's song.

"Nothing can be more unlikely," said Kate.

"Well, I don't know that: Jane is very pretty, though she has not *your* beauty."

"*My* beauty!—oh, you jest!"

"Not I, Miss Kate, not I: and I tell you, I do think *somebody* thinks seriously of your sister."

"Of course I know to whom you allude," replied Kate: "but you must not suppose that every man who pays her attention seriously intends to ask her to be his wife."

"Now do come here!" cried Mrs. Podd: "look at them walking together!—they are coming from the path by the rivulet in the valley."

"I see them," replied Kate, turning away with a deep sigh: "but their walking together in that path is no proof of any thing, dear nurse, but—but a fancy, that *may* pass away!"

and make proposals to what they may consider eligible matches—they must wait to be wooed; and if nobody comes wooing, how are *they* to blame?"

"*You* at all events cannot say *that*," replied Mrs. Podd: "it is not for want of a suitor that *you* remain single."

"And would you seriously have me accept Mr. Ibbotson?" exclaimed Kate, sitting down disconsolately and looking at her friend.

"And why not?—you have known him all your life, and yet he is not old—not more than thirty-one, —and he has loved you so long, and he's such an excellent man!"

"I believe he is;—but—but so unlike—that is, he is not the sort of person——Oh! nurse, spare me: you know what I mean, but dare not utter!"

"I *do* know what you mean, dearest Kate. But, contrast him with whom you please, is not the comparison favourable to him? He's not a man of fashion, certainly; but, for *my* part, I've had enough of men of fashion; and if his manner is not refined, there's an honest goodness about his heart, Kate, that makes amends for all."

"I know you only do him justice; but it is in vain. Never speak on this subject again.—I can never love him; you cannot, therefore, wish me to marry him;—*he* could not wish it."

"Well, I've nothing more to say," replied Mrs. Podd; "but, were I you, I should not feel comfortable at making a poor gentleman look so miserable as he does."

Kate, to avoid further discussion, went to her own chamber without making any reply; and Mrs. Podd, looking after her with a fond and anxious glance, shook her head, turned up her eyes, and then went *pat-pat* away to look after their very inconsiderable household affairs.

Mr. Morton, the present rector of Mapleton, had continued to receive pupils; but his school was less limited than that of the late Mr. Leslie. He had erected a building for their accommodation at the back of the Rectory, and he had now at least fifty scholars, under his care. Mr. Ibbotson was still retained in the capacity of usher; and while the rector himself was openly paying his addresses to the youngest Miss Leslie, Mr. Ibbotson, more humbly, but not less devoted, was pining in secret for the eldest, whose charms had won his heart at least six years ago, and whose hand, even now that she was poor and unprotected, he dared not solicit. In one respect Mr. Ibbotson was greatly changed, and for the better. He was no longer the exhibiter of small acquirements on small occasions. A few years' experience had cured him of his pedantry; and, knowing much more than he used to do, he made less display of knowledge. His eccentricity of manner had departed,—the kindness of his heart was unchanged.

Mrs. Podd was but little altered. She was less upright, perhaps, and had less activity of body; but her mind was as active and her heart as warm as ever. There are some people who are said never to grow old: such was not Mrs. Podd's happy case, for she had become old and partially decrepit (owing to her lameness) earlier than most women; but she seemed never to get beyond a certain point. Sixteen years have elapsed since she was introduced to the reader as a little, lame old body, and she might then have passed for any age between fifty and seventy: the same may be said of her now. She never had been known to mention her age; and whether it was vanity, or a delight in mystifying the curious, we know not, but no artifice had ever yet inveigled her into betraying the important secret.

CHAPTER XXIV.

Come dwell with me,
And our home shall be
A pleasant cot
In a tranquil spot,
With a distant view of the changing sea:
My cottage is a happy scene,
The sheltering boughs seem evergreen,
The streamlet, as it flows along,
Is murmuring a fairy song!
Then dwell with me!

FRANK MORTON's wooing was not likely to be unsuccessful. He was in the situation which moderate people call "well to do in the world;" and he was attached to a portionless orphan, who had no reason so conceal her preference for him.

There was no necessity for those inexplicable delays in which the more wealthy find themselves involved; nor for those voluminous tautological settlements, which, if made by a lawyer who wishes to mystify his clients, may prove any thing rather than a security for either party. Frank Morton was a younger son, whose eldest brother had but a small patrimony to expect: his profession, therefore, and the rod which he wielded, were all he had to look to. He was an independent man, but could settle neither his rectory nor his rod on his fair bride. He could not, however, fail to be considered, in a worldly sense, an excellent match for Jane Leslie; and as he loved her devotedly, and was regarded with esteem and affection by all his parishioners, and even by the dirty little schoolboys who trembled at his frown, Kate had every reason to rejoice in the fair prospect of happiness which lay before her sister.

The important question, as Jane stated, had been already "popped;" and though no definitive reply had been uttered, the expression which young Morton saw upon her blushing downcast countenance was far from being unsatisfactory. To Kate he was referred for the sanction which there was now no parent to bestow; and when frankly and affectionately she thanked him for the preference he had shown to her sister, no parent could more earnestly have implored him to be through life her kind, considerate, and indulgent friend, or could more devoutly have prayed for the prosperity of both.

The walks by the well-known rivulet were continued without interruption, the happy day was fixed, and all the preparations customary on such occasions were carried on with zeal and activity both at the Rectory and the cottage.

The reader may remember that Mrs. Podd in our last chapter made a sort of assignation with Jane's lover; and when he arrived at the hour he had named, he found the old woman bonneted and shawled, waiting for him crutch in hand ready to fulfil her threat of accompanying him in his walk.

"Here I am!" said she; "and you are not to think of any other person, if you please, until I have been attended to."

"But Jane is no doubt expecting me," he replied.

"Then she must wait until I release you. Come along! you need not fear a long ramble, for I'm not so active as I used to be; but I want to talk to you by ourselves, and out of hearing: so come this way." And off she went with her accustomed up-and-down motion, leading the way until she came to a quiet secluded spot, where she seated herself, and cried, "Now sit you there, and listen to me."

The young parson did as he was desired, and Mrs. Podd again addressed him.

"I know that it is presumption in a person in my situation to take this liberty, Mr. Morton; but, though I am a servant, I have never been one of those heartless mercenaries who live with people just so long as no opportunity offers for their *bettering themselves*, as they call it, forming no attachment for those whose bread they eat, and changing and chopping about just like spaniels, licking the hand of a new master."

"Many servants are what you describe," said Mr. Morton; "but the superiors are often to blame."

"That may be; but I have been no such servant. I lived with the mother of those two girls; and now one of them's going to be married, I've lived long enough."

"Don't say that," replied her young companion, kindly taking her hand. "You are regarded as a friend, not as a servant, and they cannot do without you."

"Oh yes, they'll do very well—what an old fool I am to cry!—Jane has told me of your kind intentions towards Miss Kate, and I honour you for them."

"I trust she will reside with us," said Mr. Morton.

"That is what I mean. The proposal does you credit, young man, and of course she will gladly accede to it."

"I hope there can be no doubt of that; and do not imagine that *you* have been overlooked in this arrangement. Kate, I am sure, would not be separated from you; and were that not the case, I know my wife would be miserable without you. You are to have your old room, and be our housekeeper."

"Do you really mean it?" exclaimed Mrs. Podd, crying, not *bitterly*, but with the sweet consciousness of being loved and appreciated by those to whom she had devoted her life,—"do you *really* mean it?"

"I do indeed," replied the rector.

"And Jane, dear Jane suggested this to you?"

"It was Jane's proposal, certainly; but I had, I assure you, myself formed a similar plan."

"I believe you, and I thank you with all my heart; and I thank God who has given my sweet Jane such a husband,—for he who is kind to a poor old woman like me must have a kind heart. I am *very, very* grateful; but it cannot be—no: when Jane is married, Kate shall go and live with her; and then my work will all be done, and I'll creep into some corner and die."

"Do not talk thus,—I shall think I have offended you."

"No, no; but I can't go and live at the Rectory again. I should be ordering about me, and arranging every thing, as I used to do in my poor old master's time; and that won't do—young people must manage their own affairs. Don't ask me to do it, for I ought not to do it; and what I oughtn't to do I won't do. No, I won't,—it's no use talking,—so, just change the subject.—How I wish we could have *two* weddings in one day!"

"You mean Miss Leslie?"

"To be sure I do," replied Mrs. Podd, wiping her eyes.

"And Mr. Ibbotson?"

The old woman nodded significantly.

"I am aware of his attachment to her; but he has never, I believe, ventured to make any proposal; and were he to do so, I fear he would be refused: besides, I doubt his having a sufficiency to make it a prudent marriage."

"Oh, what a plague that money is!" said Mrs. Podd.

"Or rather, the *want* of it, I should say," replied

the rector. "But do you think Mr. Ibbotson has expectations——"

"Oh, expectations! don't talk to me of expectations!—they go on for ever till one's dead and buried, and can't expect any longer."

"I hope that will not be Mr. Ibbotson's case, however; for a distant relation, who has always promised to leave him some few thousand pounds, is now on her death-bed."

"Then I hope for her own soul's sake she won't leave the world breaking a promise. Well, then, in addition to the little Kate has of her own, *I* can give her a very little more, saved up in her father's service."

"*You!*"

"Yes—why not? I've never spent any thing upon myself; I had no beauty to be vain of, so I had no temptation to dress myself up; to be neat and clean was enough for me, and my master found me in soap and water. So what little wages I earned is all safe, to be given back honestly to the child of the man from whom I received it."

"Dear old Mrs. Podd," exclaimed Mr. Morton, touched with her disinterested liberality; "were all as upright as you——"

"A pretty race of little crooked men and women there would be! Now, no flattery! I wanted to talk to you about Kate and Mr. Ibbotson, that should opportunities occur, you may, with the assistance of Jane, speak a good word for him: and now, as you must be very tired of me, and Miss Jane may be jealous, the sooner you go back to the cottage the better."

"And won't you lean on my arm?"

"No, no; get you gone! I've been crying and making a fool of myself, and I won't let the girls see

my eyes red, for they will fret; so I'll just wash them down at the rivulet, and take a quiet turn or two before I go home."

The young lover left her, eager to behold the dear one, and to talk with her about their plans of future comfort and happiness.

The old woman went and sat herself down by the stream to ponder over the occurrences of her past life, and to thank God that her pilgrimage on earth was drawing to a close.

CHAPTER XXV.

The bridal is over, the guests are all gone,
The bride's only sister sits weeping alone;
The wreath of white roses is torn from her brow,
And the heart of the bridemaid is desolate now.

With smiles and caresses she deck'd the fair bride,
And then led her forth with affectionate pride;
She knew that together no more they should dwell,
Yet she smiled when she kiss'd her and whisper'd farewell.

She would not embitter a festival day,
Nor send her sweet sister in sadness away;
She hears the bells ringing—she sees her depart—
She cannot veil longer the grief of her heart.

She thinks of each pleasure, each pain, that endears
The gentle companion of happier years:
The wreath of white roses is torn from her brow,
And the heart of the bridemaid is desolate now.

What have we to tell of a rural wedding? perchance only a tale told for the hundredth time. But, however hackneyed the theme, our actors are to us too interesting, from old associations, to be left unrecorded in the scene which was to them perhaps the most important of their lives: therefore for the hundredth time we must tell it.

At dawn of day the bells rang merrily, and the Parsonage became at a very early hour a scene of unusual activity. Though a thoroughly unpretending country clergyman, Mr. Frank Morton possessed, and deserved, many acquaintances, and some few friends beyond the immediate sphere of his mere clerical influence.

A rather large party had been invited to breakfast

at the Rectory; and as there was no adequate substitute for that ever-active and intelligent Mrs. Podd, the servants went to bed late and rose early.

Spring was now almost ripening into summer; chilly days occasionally came, and warned you that it was dangerous to trust to tents and temporary rooms; but still the projectors of the Rectory festival anticipated, as all such projectors invariably do, an unexceptionable sunshiny day, got up expressly for their own amusement,—and for once such expectations were not disappointed.

June is often a wet, wishy-washy, watery, cold month; May having, by some expert management, anticipated all its warmth and beauty. Jane Leslie's wedding-day was one of the most precocious days of May; and when May deigns to be genial, what month can offer greater beauty? 'Tis true that summer may clothe the gardens and the forests in more variety of bloom and fuller luxuriance of verdure; but granting this additional beauty, is it not one of the greatest charms of May, that it is the stepping-stone to summer? and

> *If* summer has more beauty,
> All that beauty is *to come.*

Suffice it then to say, that the morning of Jane Leslie's wedding-day was one of the best imitations of a summer's morning that ever was seen in the world. The birds sang as if quite in a mistake; and there was a sufficiency of flowers and foliage to convince any fashionable family that it was high time to quit the country, if they had not done so already, and go to some street or square in the metropolis.

The tables for the breakfast were laid in the summer-house, in front of which was the fountain covered with its green wire fence, and beneath it the

pure crystal water bubbled as of old. Between this spot and the Rectory house, there was, from a very early hour, a perpetual passing and repassing; one woman carrying her chickens, the next following with her tongues, while another brought up the rear with her hams.

While all was bustle at the Rectory, nothing could exceed the tranquil repose of the cottage. Jane, young, innocent, and happy, slept like some fair infant, without one dream of love, without one worldly thought of future care, and Kate and Mrs. Podd had long been ready for the business and the pleasure of the day ere the former went to her bedside with the intention of rousing her: but long and fondly did she look down upon her calm slumbers, and some sad tears did she shed ere she could summon resolution to call her from the last repose which she was ever to enjoy under that lowly roof.

When two sisters of nearly similar ages have lived together from infancy in the closest bonds of affection, seldom separated, and if separated, each planning for the other some pleasant surprise or innocent enjoyment; when one of these is called away to dwell in another house, to devote herself to other pursuits, and to bestow her heart's best affections on another human being, bitter is the trial to the solitary one who stays behind. She is to sit alone where they have sat together, to wander in silence in the garden which used to resound with their prattle and their laughter; the songs that required the melody of *two* voices must be thrown aside; and the shelf where the bride's own books, and desk, and workbox, were arranged of old, must now be vacant. The bedchamber, too, where stood the *two* white beds; where, every morning and every night, prayers were uttered by the elder sister, while the voice of the younger gave its meek response! One bed will now be ten-

antless; and the matin and the vesper prayer must now be sad and silent, though poured forth with additional fervour for the welfare of the absent.

When a bridemaid is so situated, we never can have the heart to greet her with the common phrase; for to "wish her joy" on that day is a mockery.

But it was not with a selfish feeling that Kate Leslie wept over her sleeping sister. She keenly felt the loss she was about to experience, 'tis true; but more keenly did she feel that, however kind and good her affianced husband might appear, Jane was about to quit those whose affectionate solicitude had ever been on the watch to avert from her a sorrow, and to promote her most trifling wishes. Kate fell on her knees by the bedside, and prayed for prosperity for her sister, and for calm contentment for herself. She soon rose; and having obliterated every trace of tears, she gave the slumberer a fond kiss, and began to assist in the arrangement of her simple toilet.

Mrs. Podd's excited feelings found vent alternately in talking or in tears; and, conscious that she was not in a state to assist anybody, she sat herself down in unaccustomed inactivity, tying up bunches of flowers and bows of white riband.

Mr. Ibbotson had undertaken to give the bride away, and on his arm she leaned as she walked towards the church; Kate followed, with several distant relatives and friends of the bridegroom. 'Twas natural that Jane, engrossed by the ceremony before her, should pass lightly along the churchyard path, without raising her eye, or glancing to the right or the left; but Kate, unobserved by her sister, stood still for a moment, and gazed intently on the simple tomb erected to the memory of her father: her eyes

were then raised to heaven, her lips moved, and then quickly recovering herself she proceeded to the church.

No bride was ever more simply attired, but few brides have looked more lovely than Jane; and when she was united to Frank Morton, Kate felt happy, for she doubted not the sincerity of his attachment.

It was during the rural feast that followed, that Mr. Morton led Kate into a retired part of the garden, and said,

"You are welcome home, Kate: we are not to part again."

"I thank you for the wish," replied Kate; "but I and my old friend Mrs. Podd must still inhabit our cottage. Nay, I know all the arguments you would use; but, believe me, it is better and wiser. I am always within reach, and, when summoned, shall never be reluctant to come to you. But I think I am becoming an old maid, Frank, and prefer having a house of my own."

"I think it not improbable that *somebody* may soon be in a situation to speak his mind, and may have a house as well as a heart to offer you. Till then, make *my* house your home."

"Before his offer, Frank, and after his offer, I shall beg to be left in my little cottage."

"But consider, should Mrs. Podd die, the loneliness of your situation."

"Do not talk to me on melancholy subjects to-day; I shall require all my little store of cheerfulness by-and-by. Besides, dear Podd is everlasting; I will not believe that I am ever to lose her. During your absence I shall indeed feel desolate; but you will return in a week, and then I shall be with you often."

The wedding-day had been fixed on a Monday, to enable the bride and bridegroom so far to follow fashionable precedents as to absent themselves until

the evening of the following Saturday, when it would be necessary for Mr. Morton to return to attend to his clerical duties. The little boys were to be entrusted for one week to the care of Mr. Ibbotson.

The hour of departure arrived; and Kate Leslie having exerted herself to *look* an adieu of smiles to Mr. and Mrs. Morton,—for to speak was an effort beyond her power,—she saw the carriage depart, and then went home to her solitary cottage and wept as if her heart would break.

CHAPTER XXVI.

They who love only once, raise up
One solitary shrine,
Which claims the homage of *a life*,—
And such a love is mine.

During the short absence of the bride and bridegroom, Mr. Ibbotson was indefatigable in his attention to Kate; and there was a delicacy about his solicitude which somewhat surprised her, and won her good opinion. She could not conceal from herself that had she never been wooed by George Hanson, the usher might have been a successful suitor; and it grieved her to think that her inability to give him encouragement was really rendering the poor man miserable. In vain she avoided him, or, when thrown in his way, endeavoured to convince him of the hopelessness of the pursuit, and to deter him from it by coldness of manner. He seemed conscious that he had no chance of success; yet his attentions ra-

ther increased than otherwise, and he spoke to her and looked at her with a despondency that touched her to the heart.

She was so situated, that it was not possible entirely to avoid her disconsolate swain. Forming a part of the establishment of her brother-in-law, it followed of necessity that they must often meet.

She could not relinquish the society of her beloved sister; yet constantly to meet him was most painful: for determined coolness on her part must be so marked as to cause an awkwardness in every member of so small a family; and to meet him as she would wish to meet any valued inmate of that house, was running the risk of seeming to encourage him.

There was not the smallest coquetry about poor Kate, and she dreaded the imputation of it; but still she equally dreaded being thought haughty or reserved towards one who had served her dear father with integrity and zeal. At one time she thought of asking Mrs. Podd to speak to him; then it occurred that her sister, when she returned, would be the properest person to explain to him the impossibility of her changing her mind; and then, again, she was loth to compromise his feelings by permitting the intervention of a third person; and finally, she came to the determination of speaking to him frankly herself.

It was a task of extreme delicacy; for she feared that, were she to lead him to suspect that his presence at the Rectory gave her uneasiness, he would at once invent some plea for resigning his situation, and she would not for the world have been the cause of his losing his small stipend, nor indeed of depriving Mr. Morton of the valuable services of a conscientious and indefatigable assistant.

She resolved to postpone her communication until the return of the bridal party, keeping herself en-

tirely secluded during their absence, and avoiding the many civilities which he took every opportunity of tendering. Mr. Ibbotson in the meantime became more miserable, and when not engaged in the school-room, wandered about the village like a spectre.

But even in Kate's disinclination to strike the final blow which was to be the downfall of his hopes, Mrs. Podd fancied that she detected what she elegantly called "*a hankering*," forgetting that it was not possible to speak the final word until the lover had more explicitly declared himself. All that Kate could do, was to discourage by her manner his unsolicited attentions. But while Kate was doing her very best to damp her admirer's ardour, Mrs. Podd, like a secret incendiary, was exerting herself to fan the flame, and by encouraging hints was adding fuel to the fire.

"You mustn't be too precipitate," said she to him one day.

"Precipitate!" replied the poor man: "have I not loved her for six years?"

"Well, then, on the other hand, you must not be too dilatory: there must not be too much lead in your composition."

"The precious metals are more likely to forward love-affairs than lead; and of them I can boast, even in anticipation, but little."

"Together, you will have a competency. Kate has never been used to luxury; and having gone a little down in the world since her father died, you will have the advantage of lifting her up again a step or two. It will all come right in the end, depend on it; and I advise you, as soon as Mr. and Mrs. Morton return, to make Jane your friend."

"I will do so. If true affection deserves to win her, then I may still indulge a hope: but I know my

own deficiencies; and though I am versed in some of the love-stories of Rome and Greece, I——"

"Oh! never talk of those old Romans when you go a-wooing! Why, bless you, my good man! if you wanted to *win me*, that's not the way you should set about it; *I* know better than *that!* No, no: get Mr. and Mrs. Morton to put in a good word for you now and then, as if accidental, you know, and without any particular object,—and I'll do the same; and between us all, depend on't we shall have another wedding in the old church before many months are gone by."

With this prediction Mr. Ibbotson seemed satisfied; and that day—the day of Mr. and Mrs. Morton's return—he gave the boys a half-holiday.

Happy is it for little schoolboys when affairs go prosperously with the schoolmaster. The sunshine of the master's heart must naturally communicate itself to the wooden forms and inky desks around him; while a disappointed bosom and a hopeless passion are likely to vent themselves in the exercise of the ferule and the rod.

Merrily rang the church bells on the evening of Mr. and Mrs. Morton's return; and on the following morning every member of the small parish assembled to greet him and his young bride as they passed through the churchyard to the rustic porch. Kate could not refuse to accompany her sister to the Rectory pew, where in former days they used to sit together, and listen to the feeble but deeply-touching voice of their father. Mr. Ibbotson, as a member of the family, also occupied a seat in that pew, and accident placed him next to her. She was much overcome at again finding herself in that place; and she was conscious, from his constant but unobtrusive attention, that Mr. Ibbotson observed her agitation. When the sermon was over, his ready arm was

offered for her support; and as she leaned on it, really requiring his aid as she walked towards her cottage, his refraining even from addressing her evinced a delicacy of which she had not supposed him capable. It was impossible for any man to watch a being like Kate Leslie for so many years with exclusive devotion, moulding his every action in an endeavour to please her, and conscious of the improbability of success, without becoming refined, in manner and in thought, and approximating, in a small degree, to the standard of perfection which was ever before him.

No word passed between them when Kate reached the gate of her little garden; he bowed in silence, and pressed her hand in token of the sympathy he felt with her very natural excitement; and she returned the pressure, and turned her tearful eyes towards him with an expression of gratitude.

Ibbotson went home that day happier than he had ever been in his life. For the first time he felt that Kate had appreciated his intentions towards her; and as she had promised to dine at the Rectory, he looked forward to an opportunity of following up the little advantage which he had gained.

It was not in Kate's nature to be chilling and repulsive to one who had so recently evidenced towards her the warm interest of a friend; and not only was her admirer charmed by her affability that evening, but Mr. and Mrs. Morton also looked on with complacency, fully expecting a speedy arrangement between them.

Mrs. Podd also began to anticipate the fulfilment of her prediction; for having herself dined in the Rectory kitchen, she made her appearance at ten o'clock, as she had been desired, bearing in her hand a little bright lantern: but she found that Miss Kate was not to be left to her sole guidance and protec-

tion, for Mr. Ibbotson stood ready, hat in hand, to escort her. When he offered his arm, it was not rejected: Mrs. Podd therefore went *pat-pat* on before; while Mr. Ibbotson followed, leading Kate with the greatest care, and selecting for her little feet the smoothest parts of the pathway.

Their walk that night was not silent, as had been that of the morning. Kate said little; but Mr. Ibbotson talked fluently of the happiness of Mr. Morton in possessing so excellent a wife as Jane; and then he failed not to assert that it had been Jane's happy lot to be under the judicious guidance of an elder sister, who, perfect herself, and calculated to make any man happy, had in fact communicated to her all her own rare and estimable qualities. Kate, who acquiesced in all that was said in favour of her sister, was alarmed when she found that covert praises of herself had been intended; and almost regretting that she had permitted the good and constant usher to attend her, she wished him good-night in some confusion.

But was confusion in a mistress ever yet interpreted as an unfavourable symptom by a lover? Quite the contrary: and Mr. Ibbotson, though not generally of a romantic turn of mind, hovered about the cottage, until a light beamed from an upper chamber, and he could distinctly see the shadowy outline of a slight figure passing to and fro behind the muslin blind. There he remained until the night became dark, because *his* star was obscured,—or, in *other words*, because Kate, preparatory to stepping into bed, had popped an extinguisher on her candle; and as she burned no light at night, the cottage became utterly opaque, and the lover with a deep sigh walked home.

Great changes were observed in Mr. Ibbotson about this time. He had always been a neat man,

and a clean man, but never what is called a spruce man; and the boys gazed on him in utter amazement one day when he entered the school-room in an entirely new suit, consisting of a glossy blue coat with brass buttons, a buff waistcoat and light pepper-and-salt inexpressibles. Such a suit in its first shiny bloom was not exactly calculated to overcome Kate's scruples; and Mr. Ibbotson judged amiss if he conjectured that, not having won her affections by his personal and mental qualities, the small matter of blue cloth, and the brass buttons, and the little morsel of buff, and the few yards of pepper-and-salt, would achieve the victory: in fact, he had never looked so awkward in his life as in his *new* suit, and his *old* suit was not likely to be at all promoted by it.

And yet, if the truth must be told, there was to Kate Leslie something touching in the change which Mr. Ibbotson's *outward* man had undergone,—a change which plainly told her that *within* he was *unchanged!* Infinitely more becoming to him had been the suit of well-worn, patched, and threadbare sables which he had cast aside, for it suited his habits and occupation; but in his newly-purchased garb he looked like anything rather than a country schoolmaster. But to woman's vanity (and where is the woman without it?) there was in truth something inexplicably flattering in the change which had so unexpectedly taken place. But new clothes, when the wearer is unaccustomed to them, are apt to give a singular awkwardness and embarrassment to the figure; and Mr. Ibbotson, the first Sunday that he exhibited himself in church, walked into the Rectory pew and seated himself by Kate with a most ludicrously conscious air. He sat himself down slowly, gently, reluctantly, as if he had been a lady in a new velvet gown, dreading to give it the impress of sedentary habits. He tucked up a tail of his blue coat

under each arm, gazed complacently down upon his buff waistcoat, and sat on the very edge of the seat, that the least possible morsel of the mixture breeches should come in contact with the hard deal-board.

But brief was his wearing of the blue, the buff, and the mixtures; for the relative who had lingered so long, and who had promised to leave him a handsome legacy, at length died, having in her will fulfilled the promise which she had made. Kate was one day walking alone in her little garden, when she was startled by the sudden appearance of her admirer.

Kate at the first glance perceived that there was much excitement in his manner, and she in some measure prepared herself for the scene which followed.

"I hope I do not intrude on you, Miss Leslie," said the usher in a hurried tone and confused manner: "I have sought you because it is absolutely necessary I should speak to you before I leave Mapleton."

"Leave Mapleton!" exclaimed Kate: "are you really going?"

"I am for a very brief period; my presence is necessary in the metropolis: my relative is dead, and I shall now possess an independent income."

"If you come to tell me this because you consider me a friend who will, with sincerity, rejoice in your good fortune, you only do me justice."

"I do consider you a friend, Miss Leslie," replied Ibbotson; "and I know your kind heart sympathises with all around you. But I have not yet told you, that the possession of this income only gratifies me for one reason: I may now venture to say that I can offer the woman I love a comfortable home."

"I trust, then, Mr. Ibbotson, that you are beloved

by the woman you love: if so, your happiness will be secure."

"I wish I could look with confidence to such happiness, Miss Leslie."

"You surely would not wish to possess the hand of any woman unless you were assured that you had won her heart!"

"How could such a man as I am expect to win a woman's heart?—such a woman I mean, as I have dared to aspire to."

"If she be really what you describe, Mr. Ibbotson, she will not deceive you,—she will never wed the man she cannot love: without mutual love, marriage must be a wretched state."

"Not where there is mutual esteem, on which Love may afterwards raise his bower."

"You are poetical, Mr. Ibbotson."

"I am a lover, Miss Leslie."

"But in the romance of the present, do not forget seriously to weigh the realities of the future. I have known you, Mr. Ibbotson, all my life, and I should be very sorry were any thing to occur which could prevent your looking on me in the light of a friend."

So far had Kate ventured, in the hope of deterring her admirer from coming to an open and specific avowal of his attachment. She well knew that the rejected lover very rarely can remain the unembarrassed friend: she anticipated that her refusal would, in all probability, drive Mr. Ibbotson to seek another home and other friends.

Mr. Ibbotson, perhaps, also felt conscious that he was on the verge of a declaration which, once uttered, could never be retracted; and that, were it unfavourably received, his intimate association with Kate Leslie would be at an end.

For many minutes he was silent, and it was Kate who first spoke.

"Your relative was a distant one, I believe," said she, hoping entirely to turn the conversation, "and not one endeared to you by your having enjoyed her society."

"We seldom met," replied Ibbotson; "but her affection and kindness were the more disinterested, and the more deserving of my gratitude. I had never contributed to her comfort, yet she had always my future welfare in view: she was aware of my attachment." (Kate started at this sudden and unwelcome return to the old theme, and Mr. Ibbotson paused.) "And she approved of the object of it," he continued; "how could she do otherwise? and though unable to assist me during her life, she at her death, as she had always promised, left me all she possessed, to enable me to marry her to whom my heart has been so long devoted."

Kate saw clearly that she could not hope to avoid coming to an explanation; but, as a last effort at escape, she said,

"And you are now going to attend her funeral?"

"I leave Mapleton for that purpose to-morrow," replied Mr. Ibbotson with much agitation; "and on you, dear Miss Leslie, it now depends whether I am ever again to return to a place where I have spent so many happy years."

"On *me!*" said Kate.

"Yes, on you! For many, many years you have been the one dear object that has rendered Mapleton a paradise to me. You have had other thoughts, and have often been unconscious of my presence, while I had eyes for none but you, watching you when unperceived, and when no longer near you, thinking of your beauty, and your goodness, and praying to God for your welfare. Do

not interrupt me yet, Miss Leslie; do not let me hear your answer yet,—I dread it, though I came to ask it, and do not let me hear it yet; for if it be unfavourable, it will break my heart. You are surprised to hear this from me; for you have no doubt, deemed me dull, cold, and methodical, and if a lover, incapable of loving with intensity. But Kate—dear Kate—be not offended, let me call you Kate to-day,—my devotion to you has rendered me the abstracted being which you saw me; no other interested me, and until this day, my love for you was hopeless,—I dared not tell you of it—I longed even to screen it from you, lest the knowledge of presumption should make you drive me from you. I have often thought that it was such a love as I have read of in a Latin poet,—the love of a poor mortal for a goddess from Olympus. But you are not one who will exult in giving pain,—you are too kind, too gentle and considerate; and if under all my imperfections—my coarse exterior, my uncouth manner, my many faults that render me unworthy of you,—if under all these you can trace one merit, one wish to be more deserving of your favour,—you will weigh that merit—nay, even the mere wish—against my many errors, and refrain from uttering a word that will render me miserable for life."

Kate was deeply affected by her lover's address; she wept, and was silent.

"If you cannot breathe a *kind* word, Kate, do not speak *to-day* at all; think of me when I am absent, for absence soften errors and imperfections, and *try* to think with kindness and indulgence; do not give me an answer now, but let me go—"

"Go," said Kate, "and I will write."

"No, do not write; you will find it easier to refuse me in a letter, for you would be spared the sight of

my distress. I will open no reply, Kate, for I could not dare to read it. No; let me go unanswered, and I will return to hear my fate from your lips."

"That must not be," said Kate: "to permit you to leave Mapleton in uncertainty would be to trifle with your feelings; you must hear my answer now."

"Pause for a moment, Kate; I dread it—I ought not to have sought it! Oh, what will become of me if you discard me for ever! Hesitate one hour—one moment: think of your childhood—the days that are past, the friend who is gone—your father, Kate—pardon me for touching on so mournful a theme, but let us walk together to his tomb, and let the memory of one so dear to both of us plead for me: where *he* here, Kate, would he not join our hands, invoking blessings on us both?"

Kate Leslie wept bitterly, and allowed Mr. Ibbotson to take her hand. She, however, soon recovered her self-possession, and said,

"It cannot be, Mr. Ibbotson. Were my dear father here, he would warn me not to deceive an honourable man: I must never marry one I do not love. Nay, do not answer me yet, nor accuse me of cold unkindness: I esteem you, Mr. Ibbotson,—as a dearly-valued friend I esteem you; it would grieve me to the heart to think that you left this place on my account. It must not be: leave it for a time, if you will; some arrangement shall be made by my brother-in-law, some temporary substitute found during your brief absence; but come back to us again—come when change of scene has restored your serenity and self-possession."

"Never!" cried Ibbotson choking with emotion.

"Say not so, Mr. Ibbotson," replied Kate, kindly, and somewhat terrified into calmness of manner by his violent agitation. "You have allowed one

thought to engross you too long; you have falsely estimated my value, you have made an idol of a weak erring mortal, and you will hereafter wonder at your infatuation."

"I have already been presumptuous," said poor Ibbotson; "but desperation drives me to that which is perhaps more inexcusable. If you love another, I am indeed without hope! I have no right to ask the question, and by speaking on such a subject I am, perhaps, exciting anger where I would have inspired affection: but I would fain know the worst. Kate Leslie, tell me—forgive me for so bold a question—and tell me if you love another?"

Kate turned deadly pale, and for some moments was incapable of uttering a reply. At length she dried her tears, and, turning to him, she said,

"I am about to tell you that which I never expected to breathe to mortal: but it is my duty to speak the truth, were it only to degrade myself from that ideal standard of perfection to which your partiality has raised me. What I am about to confess will end your delusion; you will feel that I am not the being you imagined me,—but weak and erring, and unfit to make your home a happy one!"

"Impossible!" said Ibbotson.

"Do not interrupt me," continued Kate: "it is only by an effort that I can speak of—of the past. Listen to me. You cannot have forgotten one who —who——"

"Name him not," replied her lover; "I know what you would say, and I was conscious of your preference for him; but—I need not remind you of his errors."

"Nor that those errors separated him from me *for ever*. No; I am aware of that, and I only remember him now in my prayers. But loving *him*

as you tell me you loved *me*, can I ever love another?"

"No; nor did I expect it. Had I loved one so unworthy of my love, I could not again have felt the same affection for another. But he is as one dead to us; and if of the dead we feel no jealously, why should the memory of your first love for him render *me* hopeless? The virtuous cannot wish to be united to the vicious; and Kate Leslie cannot still cherish in her pure heart a love for George Hanson. There was a time when *I* loved him almost with a brother's love; and when you are my wife—nay, Kate, let me say the word—we will kneel together, and pray for his welfare here and hereafter."

"Ibbotson," replied Kate, deeply touched by his earnest affection,—"William Ibbotson, you deserve the first love of the heart you value, and I have told you frankly all I have to tell. I can never forget George Hanson: young as I was, the influence which he obtained over me is wonderful to myself. I shall never love another as I loved him."

"I ask it not, I expect it not; but say that you do not look forward to a union with him: I know you *cannot* do so."

"I do not—I never did. When he left us, and—but let us not talk of his conduct, nor of that poor girl who—Hear me—what I meant to say is this: when *that* occurred, I regarded him as one dead."

"And knowing this, Kate, and esteeming you more than ever for this confession, say that you will be mine: I will deserve your esteem, and let me be your dearest friend—the one who is privileged to guard you through life. Give me your hand in token of compliance; do not say one word to-day. You will not again see me for many days,—the interval will restore you to composure; and when we do

meet, Kate, let your smiles convince me that you think I may make you happy."

Kate extended her hand to the lover who so well eserved that token of her regard; he kissed it with fervour, and left her to wonder at the result of their interview, and to confide to Mrs. Podd a secret which almost made that elderly personage jump for joy.

Mr. Ibbotson returned to the Rectory in a state of excitement which could not fail to raise the curiosity of Mr. and Mrs. Morton; and though he told no tales, it was soon ascertained that great part of his morning had been passed at the cottage,—and then they easily conjectured the truth.

Whatever mystery still remained was soon dispelled by Mrs. Podd, who that evening feigned an absolute necessity for a walk to the Rectory; and having made known (in strict confidence) her story to the inhabitants of the kitchen, the news was revealed to the dwellers in the parlour, and even to the little occupants of the school-room before they retired for the night to their small beds shaded with white dimity curtains.

Mr. Ibbotson had that evening departed from Mapleton, anticipating a blissful return after a lapse of ten days.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.